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**"Trustees of Posterity": Benjamin Disraeli and  
the European "Bildungsroman"**

**Sandra Jean Farmer**

**For the degree of Ph.D.**

**King's College London**

**University of London**

**This thesis studies Benjamin Disraeli's use of the form of the "Bildungsroman" to invent and discover himself. It shows how Disraeli's own life was developing as a "Bildungsroman" while writing four of his twelve novels, Contarini Fleming, Coningsby, Sybil and Lothair, during the period 1832-1870.**

**As each of these four novels is studied in turn in Chapters I-IV respectively, Disraeli's recurring hero appears in four guises, thus illustrating how the form of the "Bildungsroman" undergoes subtle changes.**

**In the open-ended Contarini Fleming (1832) with its emphasis on youth and ambition, Disraeli had intended to create a work similar to the classical German "Bildungsroman" portraying the development of a character. Despite its many comparisons with Goethe's paradigmatic Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, Disraeli's early novel has more of an affinity with Stendhal's Le rouge et le noir. The eponymous hero of Coningsby has the distinguishing quality of "insipidness" and is seen from the perspective of an exemplary class representative of the aristocracy. This novel is taken as an example of the English "Bildungsroman", an English "fairy story" because Coningsby's destiny is already predetermined. The hero of Sybil, Charles Egremont's conviction is that one's identity is not inherited but created, which returns to the classical ideal of "Bildung", and which Disraeli reformulated as "vocation". It is argued that poverty and its relief was not the theme of Sybil but was used to point to the opportunities open to a re-educated aristocracy.**



**In Chapter IV it is shown that it is only with Lothair, written in old age, that Disraeli discovers himself and achieves a successful classical "Bildungsroman". The narrator evaluates the represented events in a restrained and indirect manner and demonstrates a concern with analysing what is involved in the hero's discovery of himself and the world. The "Bildungsroman's" valorization of the existing social order prompts Lothair to look towards the past. He refuses to consider the future still open and his discontinuation of the quest for a philosophy of life is presented as a sign of his achieved maturity and his "Bildung" is concluded. In these four self-referential works Disraeli constructed a composite character whose biography was that of the author himself.**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT**

### **Texts by Disraeli**

In the case of Disraeli's novels, the Bradenham edition of The Novels and Tales of Benjamin Disraeli, edited by Philip Guedalla, 12 vols. (London, 1927) has been used. Page references to Vol. 4 Contarini Fleming are to this edition and appear parenthetically in the text as CF. Other volumes referred to are as follows:-

<u>C</u>	Vol. 8 <u>Coningsby</u>
<u>E</u>	Vol. 12 <u>Endymion</u>
<u>L</u>	Vol. 11 <u>Lothair</u>
<u>S</u>	Vol. 9 <u>Sybil</u>
<u>V</u>	Vol. 7 <u>Venetia</u>
<u>VG</u>	Vol. 1 <u>Vivian Gray</u>
<u>YD</u>	Vol. 2 <u>The Young Duke</u>

<u>DL I and DL IV</u>	<u>Benjamin Disraeli Letters: 1815-1847</u> , edited by J.A.W. Gunn, M.G. Wiebe et al, (Toronto, 1982-1989).
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## **Other Texts**

### **DD**

George Eliot, Daniel Deronda, edited with an introduction by Barbara Hardy, (Harmondsworth, 1967).

### **M**

George Eliot, Middlemarch, edited by W.J. Harvey, (Harmondsworth, 1965).

### **SB**

Stendhal, Scarlet and Black: a chronicle of the nineteenth century, translated by Margaret R.B. Shaw, (Harmondsworth, 1953).

### **W**

Sir Walter Scott, Waverley, edited with an introduction by Andrew Hook, (Harmondsworth, 1972).

### **WM**

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, Wilhelm Meisters Years of Apprenticeship: Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre, translated by H.M. Waidson, 3 vols (London, 1977).

## **INTRODUCTION**

**This thesis is a study of Disraeli and his use of the form of the "Bildungsroman" to invent and discover himself. It attempts to show that the hero whose "biography" appears in each "Bildungsroman" is that of the author who created him. Disraeli wrote twelve novels and a fragment between 1826 and 1880; the autobiographical nature of the early fiction rendered it a vehicle for his ambition and all his novels were an expedient means of demonstrating his sense of his own genius and its power in the pursuit of political success.**

**The term "Bildungsroman" was borrowed from the German, and I take the term to refer to the genre associated with Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, which appeared both in France and England as well as in Germany in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Central to the "Bildungsroman" is the notion of the selfhood of the individual achieved through growth, and of social experience which forms that self: the projected resolution of this process is an adjustment to society. The genre's association with the value of the individual and the fact that it was often autobiographical was central to Disraeli's project.**

**The typical "Bildungsroman" showed the development of an intelligent, open-minded young man in a society both complex and without generally accepted values. Since the French Revolution changes in society had appeared meaningless and threatening: in 1831 John Stuart Mill found the distinguishing characteristic of the time was transition in which "mankind have outgrown old institutions and old doctrines, and have not yet acquired new ones" (1). In 1833 Disraeli's friend,**

Edward Bulwer-Lytton wrote in England and the English that "old opinions, feelings - ancestral customs and institutions are crumbling away, and both the spiritual and temporal worlds are darkened by the shadow of change." (2).

Disraeli found society then "in the midst of a convulsion in which the very principles of our political and social systems are called in question" [C p.155].

This anxiety accounted for the focus on history and narrative in nineteenth-century culture: they offered the possibility of endowing events with meaning and order. Many writers and works appeared responsive to particular phases of social and economic development. This is not to suggest that all writers were always responsive to changes in society, although it would be difficult to argue that any author gives his account of the world from an impartial position. To advance such a disinterested view, the author would have to be wholly divorced from society itself. Disraeli responded to social change in a specific way: from seeing himself as the great statesman, through the role of the reformer, to resignation to the fact that individuals can have little influence on the progress of nations. In consequence Disraeli created a hero who was a fictionalised self and who, over a period of forty years was "sustained by a profound, however vague, conviction, that there are still great truths, if we could but work them out; that Government, for instance, should be loved and not hated, and that Religion should be a faith and not a form" [C p.156]. It is from the last sentence of Sybil that the title of this thesis is taken: "The claims of the Future are represented by suffering millions; and the Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Posterity". (S p.492).

Disraeli's biographer, Robert Blake refers to the young Disraeli as:

...a youth of immense ambition, consumed with an almost insolent determination to make his mark. The conquest of a hostile or indifferent world - military metaphors recur constantly when he writes about politics and society - is the theme of his life, and it remained so till in his old age he had finally triumphed. (3)

This does not automatically presuppose that this personal ambition would influence the themes of his novels, nor the mode of perception they articulate. Art may mirror personal ambition or conflict, it may also transcend it, but it certainly mediates it. It may also be argued that fiction with a "propagandist" purpose was a feature of the 1840s, and discussion of Disraeli's novels is usually in terms of whether they are "political" or "social" novels. Blake states that in Coningsby:-

...he produced the first and most brilliant of English political novels, a genre which he may be said to have invented, and in Sybil he produced one of the most famous social novels. (4)

The American scholar M.E. Spence published The Political Novel: its development in England and America in 1924; he sees political fiction evolving in the 1840s and the book is essentially an apologia for Disraeli spelling out his political creed in the Young England trilogy of Coningsby, Sybil and Tancred in 1844-1847. George Watson in The English Ideology: studies in the language of Victorian politics, argues that Disraeli made relevant "a corpus of fiction unique in the world...in the simple prominence it confers on the parliamentary idea". (5). Christopher Harvie's evaluation published in 1991 has as its thesis the "Disraelian" type of political novel, which merges "entertainment" and ideology and therefore produces a useful political discourse for a traditional society intent



on social and economic change. For Harvie the central figure is Disraeli who sets out his political creed in the Young England trilogy and then dominates the Conservative Party for thirty-three years.

In 1979 Daniel Schwarz referred to Disraeli's Young England trilogy as "a political geography" which suggests "how England could experience a political and moral rebirth". (7) While he refers to Coningsby as a "Bildungsroman" concerned with the intellectual and moral development of a potential political leader, in Schwarz's treatment of the novel it oscillates between "Bildungsroman" and "a novel of purpose", because as he argues Disraeli not only "embraced the romance of Coningsby's heroism" but he also wrote "as spokesman for and leader of Young England". (8).

In Disraeli the Novelist, in 1981 Thom Braun does emphasize the writer Disraeli rather than merely focusing on his novels. He argues that his novels are not about "government", but rather are concerned with "national characteristics, heroic ideals, lofty principles and the acquisition of power by which those characteristics, ideals and principles might be achieved" (9). For Braun the novels are more important for what they tell us about the author than as works of art. By contrast, my aim in this thesis is to show how Disraeli's life develops as a 'Bildungsroman', while writing novels in the form of the "Bildungsroman".

There exist many differences among the various kinds of "Bildungsromane", most pertinently for this study in plot difference, and I

attempt to show how Disraeli's recurring "hero" appears in four versions of the "Bildungsroman" and how the form undergoes subtle changes. Each of the four parts of this study centres on a novel; Part I on Contarini Fleming, Part II on Coningsby, Part III on Sybil and Part IV on Lothair. Though many reviewers and critics of his early novel Contarini Fleming compared it with Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, it is with Lothair, written in old age, that Disraeli can be said to have achieved a successful classical "Bildungsroman". Of the many critics and reviewers of Disraeli's work only Susanna Howe in 1930 discusses in any depth Disraeli's use of the "apprentice theme". In Wilhelm Meister and his English Kinsmen: apprentices to life, she confines her comments to Vivian Grey, Contarini Fleming and Lothair. She sees this "partial" use of the "apprentice theme" as due to the "fashionable novel formula", and the "action" motif as "due to vague echoes of Goethe, and probably not to the Carlyle influence which did color (sic) his friend Bulwer's work." (10)

I would contend Disraeli emulates Goethe in writing about the relationship of the cultivation of the whole personality to the world of society, and appears to adopt as his own "leitmotif" the following question which Wilhelm Meister poses when he decides to enter the theatre:

What good is it to manufacture good iron if my own soul is filled with slag, and what good is it to put a country in order if I am always at odds with myself?

As a novel Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre is evidently intended to interest the reader at least as much for the ideas it presents as for its presentation of characters and events.

In terms of its portrayal of the hero, the "Bildungsroman" operates with a tension between a concern for the complexity of an individual's potentiality and the recognition that the practical reality of marriage, family, friends and career is a necessary dimension of the hero's self-realisation, although one that implies both a delimitation and a construction of the self. The tension is between the possible selves within the hero and the potentiality and the actuality. This tension is central to the process of thematic argument of the "Bildungsroman", for the "Bildungsroman" is not simply an allegory of inwardness, celebrating the imagination of the hero as the faculty which allows him to transcend the limitations of everyday practicality - living is an art to be learned, and reality continuously impinges on the inwardness of the hero. It is this process which is the source both of uncertainty and irony and also what makes learning from life such a tentative progression. It offers a definition of experience which precludes any simple sense of finality. The notion of a goal has a place within human affairs, yet ultimately the meaning of the "Werden" - growth process - is to be found in the process itself, and Wilhelm Meister poses the question whether the hero has achieved any kind of worthwhile insight.

In Part I, I show that although Disraeli acknowledges his debt to Goethe and intended to write a "Bildungsroman" in the style of Wilhelm Meister, his novel Contarini Fleming identifies the hero's formation as an individual, not with his integration within the rules of society, but with an attempt to undermine them. What disappears is the notion of experience as a formative encounter with reality, an accommodation of the new in order to develop his personality. While

for Contarini Fleming his experience is an aimless detour, for Wilhelm Meister it is the path to maturity. In Contarini Fleming it is the open-ended narrative which makes it meaningful; there is no fulfilled solution for the hero and Disraeli chose to leave the future ambiguous.

In Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung (1906) Dilthey suggests that the growth of maturity through experience is a teleological progress towards the discovery of the self. The hero:

in the happy dawn of his youth enters into life, seeks after kindred souls, encounters friendship and love, but then comes into conflict with the hard realities of the world, thus growing in maturity through a variety of experiences of life, finding his true self and becoming certain of his task in the world (11).

But in Wilhelm Meister Goethe shows that the intellectual and emotional progress is not a cumulative linear development. The only time Wilhelm shows any confidence in himself is at the very beginning of the narrative and from there Goethe shows his hero's progress as far from confident, and notable rather for its self-doubt and confusion.

The distinguishing characteristic of the hero of Coningsby is "insipidness". I have taken Coningsby to be a "Bildungsroman" and the eponymous hero to be an exemplary class representative of the aristocracy with a mentor, Sidonia who is based on Disraeli. Disraeli stopped short of conflict within Coningsby and instead presents an English "Bildungsroman", a fairy tale romance opposition of right versus wrong, emphasising this quality with a happy

ending. The meaning of events in Coningsby lies in their closure; events acquire meaning when they lead to a particularly marked ending.

In Sybil, Disraeli deals with some issues characteristic of the classical "Bildungsroman", with his hero, Egremont aware that one creates, rather than inherits, an identity. Disraeli however reformulates this awareness as a vocation, where the synthesis of the development of the individual for the collective benefit of society is more ambitious than in the classical "Bildungsroman". While Sybil is a novel of marriage, which is seen as the definitive act at the end of the development of the "Bildungsroman", it is disembodied in an abstract principle. Disraeli's Egremont marries Sybil who is not a true daughter of the people, but who is revealed, melodramatically as an heiress. She is not a woman, so much as a symbol of a rigidly normative culture.

The narrator of Lothair evaluates the represented events in a restrained and indirect manner and, importantly, shows a concern with analysing what is involved in the hero's discovery of himself and the world. This is Disraeli's mature response to what he sees as the threat to humane values posed by mechanistic philosophy and science. Disraeli disapproved of conceptions of human nature which either separated the essential being of man from the natural domain completely, or assimilated it entirely in an unfeeling and mechanistic universe. This is Disraeli's attempt to combine expressions of private aspiration and images of the real world into a single work in order to expose the inadequacy of the mechanical world. Disraeli places the novel in the firmly historical setting

of the Italian Revolution; this is in order to demonstrate his alternative vision of what man is through Lothair's thought processes, which are as a result of the hero's experience of action in that turbulent world.

Disraeli offers us his "hero" who, although expressing the view that all his opinions "on every subject" are formed, has an untried sense of who and what he is. He does not know what he needs or what he can do and, like his author, has to find out through experience just what is contingent and what is necessary in this sense of self. At the same time there must be the discovery of what is immutable and what is changeable in the given world; this discovery must be, (and for Disraeli is), the reward of his own personal experience.

That life is both necessity and contingency is, in itself, not a useful piece of information to offer to an individual in the process of discovering his true self and his duty to society. What the truth is in actuality in Lothair's case is something which can be established only by the particularities of his own individual self-discovery. Disraeli himself wrote his one true novel of youth retrospectively. The "Bildungsroman" Lothair reflects both Disraeli's initially given self and the world as relatively remote from the condition to which his potential capacity aspired. His was a case in which his creative energy worked through his own sense of what should be, and can be seen struggling, and eventually prevailing against the resistance around him.

## **CHAPTER I**

**Contarini Fleming as "Bildungsroman": comparisons with Goethe's  
Wilhelm Meister and Stendhal's Le Rouge et le Noir**

Since its publication in 1832 Disraeli's novel, Contarini Fleming: a psychological romance, has been compared with Goethe's Wilhelm Meister (1). When it was published, the reviewers generally agreed on its German ancestry and influences. The critic of The Spectator wrote that:

It is a sentimental extravaganza, of a pseudo-German birth: it has the sentimentality and the mysticism of a German, with the nonchalance and the rapidity of PIGAULT LE BRUN. This must be supposed to be mixed up with something peculiarly English: what that is, it is difficult to say, unless it be a reckless indifference to consequences, as shown in that exemplary work Lord Byron's Don Juan (2).

Edward Bulwer-Lytton's review in New Monthly Magazine of July 1832 drew attention to its connection with Wilhelm Meister:

Contarini Fleming is a delineation of abstract ideas, in which, as in Wilhelm Meister the Author is often allegorical and actual at the same time. (3)

In Contarini Fleming Disraeli had intended to create a work similar to the German "Bildungsroman", portraying the development of a character. Disraeli's enterprise was the formation of a poetic mind, and in his Preface to the novel of July 1845, Disraeli states his debt to Goethe:

The author proposed to himself, in writing the work, a subject that has ever been held one of the most difficult and refined, and which is virgin in the imaginative literature of every country - namely, the development and formation of the poetic character. It has, indeed, been sometimes incidentally treated, and partially illustrated by writers of the highest class, as for instance Goethe in his Wilhelm Meister, where are explained, with so much felicity, the mysteries of predisposition; and the same illustrious author has, in his capricious memoirs favoured us with much of his individual experience of self-formation... [CF p.IX].



While Disraeli acknowledges his debt to Goethe, the formation of "the poetic character" is a phrase at once suggestive of Keats. Keats's prime belief was in Art and Beauty - the opening line of his Endymion, is "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever", and it is subtitled "a poetic romance". Keats's reputation is as a poet preoccupied by the nature of the imagination, but both Keats and Disraeli used imagination to criticise reality. Endymion is an escape from the grim early nineteenth-century reality of Britain to the supposed natural freedom of ancient Greece. The criticism implicit in Book III is of Keats attitude to the "present ministry" and conventional political, religious and sexual beliefs, but also, through allegory he is able to depict the awakening of the sympathetic imagination marking a necessary phase in the growth of a poet. Disraeli uses the name of Endymion for his character in his last novel (1880) which was a retracing of formative biography about principled conduct, the rise to fame and the acquisition of power through imaginative criticism.

British fiction was not influenced by Wilhelm Meister until Carlyle's 1824 translation, which Disraeli probably read in that year when he went to Germany. His copy, still in the library at Hughenden Manor, is the 1824 edition (4). Disraeli certainly constructed Contarini Fleming as well as his penultimate finished novel, Lothair, on the "Bildungsroman" model, where the term "Bildungsroman" is used to describe any novel depicting the development of a single hero. The term is reserved for a certain type of novel, the origins of which lie in eighteenth-century Germany and which has, as a primary reference point, Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. Although Goethe drew on

Wieland's Agathon in creating his character, most critical discussions of the "Bildungsroman" make some reference to Wilhelm Meister as paradigm (5).

The essential generic characteristic of the form is a concern with the portrayal of an individual's "Bildung" where "Bildung" denotes a distinctively Germanic pursuit of harmonious self-development, generally conducted at a distance from the arena of public experience. Contarini Fleming is obviously enough in some sense "about" the development of its hero, and to that extent it can be considered along side other narratives of human spiritual and emotional growth (6). It traces his life from schoolboy through his early love affair, his first efforts as a poet, including a book on the nature of the poetic temperament, his brief political ascendancy, and marriage to a seemingly unattainable, beautiful Venetian cousin who dies in childbirth. In despair Contarini Fleming embarks on wanderings in the East which culminate in a decision to build himself a palace of art as a retreat.

Wilhelm Meister is a representation of the growth towards maturity of a sensitive individual undertaken in the service of a further end. Although "about" the hero's development, there is a case for a wider claim about Wilhelm Meister: that the narrative of the hero's experiences offers insights into human nature which could not be conveyed adequately in discursive arguments. Wilhelm Meister's experience refers to the tendency to acquire insights which implies growth, the expansion of self or an experiment on one's self which becomes an experience if Meister gives it meaning which strengthens and expands his

personality. Wilhelm Meister offers a particular understanding of the nature of humanity through the overtly fictitious narrative of Goethe's central character's development, and this is the most important feature which gives Wilhelm Meister its peculiar generic identity. It is this feature which sets it apart from Contarini Fleming and Stendhal's Le rouge et le noir in which the hero's development is the ultimate as well as the ostensible concern.

Self-formation as a synthesis of harmony and variety, and the homogeneity of individual autonomy and socialization are dismissed by Contarini Fleming and Julien Sorel. They are not appeased by the happiness of synthesis, but live in a state of conflict with the existing order.

## I

Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre was published between 1794 and 1796 as a reworked Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung. The presence of Wilhelm Meister's influence on Contarini Fleming is discernible, despite Disraeli's assertion that he "meditated over the entireness of the subject" of poetic development, and that it seemed to him that the "auto-biographical form was a necessary condition of a successful fulfilment. It seemed the only instrument that could penetrate the innermost secrets of the brain and heart...". For Disraeli, in his Bradenham edition Preface, "the self-discoverer" was "an indispensable agent". [CF pp.IX-X] which was not the case with Goethe, who maintained a much greater distance between himself and Wilhelm than he did with his hero in Die Leiden des jungen Werthers (1774) which is a dramatisation of the state of subjectivity as well as of actual events in Goethe's life in 1772 (7). While he claims Contarini Fleming as autobiography, Disraeli cannot confine himself to his own experiences for the formation of the "poetic mind" even if, as he asserts, no-one else can get inside the mind of a young boy [CF p.X].

Carlyle's studies in German literature, as well as his translation of Wilhelm Meister were published before Contarini Fleming was written. Through his translations, articles and Sartor Resartus Carlyle was, together with Coleridge, the main mediator of German ideas in England, and the promoter of the concept of Germany as a country of "poets and thinkers", particularly in the 1820s.

The German literary generation which was writing in the 1790s including Tieck and Novalis, saw life as dream, theatre or miracle. The German Romantic mentality was not political because there was no substantial, unified polity to act against. This political, social and economic disunity militated strongly against any sense of national identity. The Germans had no rallying point in their literature and could not appeal to an immediate native tradition such as that in France; there was no poet of the stature of Racine, Dante or Shakespeare. As a consequence there was a greater willingness to experiment with new ideas and techniques. German literature was to focus on private experience, inward culture and frustration. The German Romantics' interest in the Middle Ages and the rediscovery of the German art of the past were more an expression of a kind of Utopian nostalgia than an outcome of nationalist fervour. There was no equivalent in Germany of the French Revolution of 1789. The Germans concluded that the enlightened notions of the French "philosophes" had precipitated disastrous consequences in France and that consequently poets and philosophers should not engage in political thought.

After 1819 Carlyle read the work of the philosophers Kant, Fichte, Schelling and the Schlegel brothers which he frequently misunderstood. However his encounter with German thought restored his faith in the existence of a transcendent spiritual order underlying the apparent world, giving it what reality it might possess, and he translated this world in terms of values derived from a different invisible one. But it was the imaginative writers of Germany, such as Schiller, Jean Paul Richter and Goethe, whom he admired. In 1822 Carlyle published an essay on Goethe's Faust in the New Edinburgh Review, and a biography of Schiller in instalments in the London Magazine from 1823 to 1824. With his translations, his German Romance: specimens of its chief authors (1827)

(8), his biography of Schiller and in his essays for the review Carlyle can be considered as the first serious interpreter of German literature.

The central attraction to German Romanticism was the emphasis it placed on the uniqueness of the individual experience set against the eternal and limitless perspectives of time and space. He defines the idea in the opening of Heroes and Hero-Worship:

"There is but one Temple in the Universe", says the devout Novalis, "and that is the Body of Man. Nothing is holier than the high form...". This sounds much like a mere flourish of rhetoric; but it is not so...We are the miracle of miracles - the greatest inscrutable mystery of God. (9)

Carlyle's theory of the hero can obviously be traced to the influence of German thought, a legacy of idealism in which "The great man, with his free force direct out of God's own hand, is like lightning" (10). His "heroes" were Heroes as Priest such as Luther and John Knox, and Cromwell who preceded Napoleon, "Hero as King". His reformulation of German thought was highly selective, often sentimentalized and over-simplified.

Carlyle was hostile to fiction, and in his essay "Biography" asserted that fiction was merely "mimic Biography", and that genuine biography was to be preferred especially to "froth Prose in the Fashionable Novel". Fiction "partakes...of the nature of lying" and whereas "here and there, a Tom Jones, a Meister, a Crusoe,....will yield no little solacement to the minds of men", nevertheless they will yield "immeasurably less than a Reality would" (11). Disraeli takes up this point when Contarini Fleming's politician father advises

him to read regularly in order to be an accomplished and successful politician, particularly "everything about Napoleon...Read no history, nothing but biography, for that is life without theory". [CF, p.110].

Napoleon Bonaparte's exemplary life was central to the nineteenth-century imagination. He was the soldier who put merit ahead of status, but he was also a despot who used men as tools and silenced public opinion. It was the biography of Napoleon which spawned the dynamic, ambiguous and ambitious hero. Stendhal's position in relation to his time was one of revolt, and projecting himself through his protagonist, Julien Sorel is portrayed as being in conflict with his milieu. Julien Sorel as a peasant is an outsider, nurtured by the example of Napoleon, soldier become emperor, who would become an aristocrat in a caste society, in which an equality promised by the 1789 revolution was no longer a possibility. He adopted a code of hypocrisy, because it seemed to him the only method by which a man of humble birth, such as Napoleon, could make his way in the world. Sorel's choice would have been the scarlet tunic, but by force of circumstance, his alternative was the priest's black cassock which led him to suppress his real feelings and which allowed Stendhal to develop his theme of conflict between society and the individual.

Carlyle's concern is with the individual, and in his translation of Wilhelm Meister he seems to ignore the humanising aspect of Goethe's concept of "Bildung", particularly its emphasis on the peaceful and successful integration of the individual with society. It is clear that Goethe's concept of the

**"Bildungsroman" sought to indicate the conflict between the ideal of self determination and the equally important demands of socialisation; Wilhelm Meister's formation as an individual in and for himself coincides without rifts with his social integration as a simple part of a whole. He needs to give his life shape and make a connection between the internal with the external relationships of other human beings, which, if it fails, will mean his life is not only unfinished but meaningless. Self development and integration are complementary; their convergence and the subsequent stability implies maturity.**

**In his Translator's Preface to the first edition of Wilhelm Meister Carlyle argues that Wilhelm is a weak hero with an "artistic" temperament, in a quest for self-culture. He has an active mind, but does not "act":**

**...the characters are samples to judge of, rather than persons to love or hate; the incidents are contrived for other objects than moving or affrighting us; the hero is a milksop, whom with all his gifts, it takes an effort to avoid despising. The author himself,...wears a face of the most still indifference throughout the whole affair; often it is even wrinkled by a slight sardonic grin. For the friends of the sublime, then, for those who cannot do without heroic sentiments and "moving accidents by flood and field", there is nothing here that can be of any service. (12)**

**Goethe called Wilhelm Meister "ein armer Hund" (a poor dog), explaining that a passive and informed character best illustrated life in all its complexities:**

**Only with such a character can one show really clearly the vicissitudes and the thousand different tasks of life not with characters which are already rounded and fixed (13).**

**Wilhelm Meister has an artistic temperament, but he decides to devote his life to society at large, because he realises that he has not the ability to be a true artist.**



Carlyle misses the harmonious self-culture aspect and emphasises his own doctrine of work and the necessity for "acting as well as suffering". Contarini Fleming outlines the individual's struggle between action and the poetic temperament. For a short period of his life, from 1 September 1833 to 12 November 1837 Disraeli had kept a diary in which he had noted at infrequent intervals his career's progress and his reactions to its development. It became known as the Mutilated Diary as certain passages are heavily overscored and whole pages removed. In the Mutilated Diary Disraeli makes clear not only the autobiographical significance of the work, but also the gospel of action advocated by Carlyle:

My mind is a continental mind. It is a revolutionary mind. I am only truly great in action. If ever I am placed in a truly eminent position I shall prove this. I co[u]ld rule the House of Commons, altho' there wo[ul]d be a great prejudice against me at first. It is the most jealous assembly in the world... Poetry is the safety valve of my passions, but I wish to act what I write. My works are the embodiment [sic] of my feelings. In Vivian Grey I have portrayed [sic] my active and real ambition. In Alroy, my ideal ambition. The P.R. [Psychological Romance i.e. Contarini Fleming] is a developmt of my poetic character [DL I p.447].

Disraeli's use of German works indicates that this personal manifesto, which he himself felt was "auto-biographical", cannot be simply reduced to autobiography. In order to describe the formation of "poetic character" he does not, and also cannot, confine himself to his own experiences, if only because his experience was very limited (14). His Revolutionary Epick was not published until two years after the appearance of Contarini Fleming in 1834 which was his main contribution to poetry. Therefore he was forced to use the German example of Goethe, whose work he considered the expression of the poetic in a particularly

pure form, albeit through the filter of Carlyle's translation for Disraeli was unable to read it in the original German (15).

Heine's praise for Contarini Fleming is probably the most often quoted and best known which draws a parallel with the work of the German Romantics. There is, however, no source for Heine's words which have been quoted in the standard six-volume Life of Benjamin Disraeli by Monypenny and Buckle as well as in F.C. Brewster's Disraeli in Outline published in 1890 which was probably Monypenny and Buckle's source (16). Heine's words as quoted are as follows:

Modern English letters has given us no offspring equal to Contarini. Cast in our Teutonic mould, it is nevertheless one of the most original works written: profound, poignant, pathetic; its subject, most interesting, if not the noblest imaginable - the development of a poet; truly psychological; passion and mockery; Gothic richness, the fantasy of the Saracens, and yet over all a classic, even a deathlike repose (17).

It was in the Introduction to the fourth volume of German Romance that Carlyle put into words what Disraeli was later trying to achieve:

But Goethe's culture as a writer is perhaps less remarkable than his culture as a man. He has learned not in head only, but also in heart; not from Art and Literature, but also by action and passion, in the rugged school of experience. If asked what was the grand characteristic of his writings, we should not say knowledge, but wisdom. A mind that has seen, and suffered, and done, speaks to us of what it has tried and conquered (18).

Goethe was Carlyle's spiritual mentor, and for him proof that faith and intellectual integrity could still be reconciled. Carlyle translated this world in terms of values derived from a different and invisible one and saw in Goethe the model of the man of letters as intermediary between the Divine and Human or the Ideal and Real worlds. Goethe recognised that a concept of the self and

notions of identity are not only given in experience, but must necessarily be arrived at and worked through intellectually.

In Contarini Fleming Disraeli utilises what little experience he had, mainly his experience of his father, Isaac D'Israeli's doubts about the poetic enterprise, when Baron Fleming admits to his son that "it was the anxiety of affection, that prevented me from doing justice to your genius". [CF p.359]. Henry Crabb Robinson records in his journals that he used to have frequent talks at the Athenaeum with Isaac D'Israeli who was "vain of his son", and recommended that he read "Contarini Fleming as a portrait of himself" (19). That the relationship of father and son is one of the themes in Contarini Fleming is beyond doubt. Baron Fleming gives advice which could have emanated from Isaac D'Israeli. Contarini Fleming is told that he is "headstrong and imprudent" and must learn to control his imagination. Poets lived lives of misery, and posthumous fame is no substitute for actual power. Consequently Baron Fleming feels it is better to be Napoleon than Shakespeare:

What you have felt is what I have felt myself, is what all men have felt...Mix in society and I will answer that you lose your poetic feeling; for in you, as in the great majority, it is not a creative faculty originating in a peculiar organisation, but simply the consequence of a nervous susceptibility that is common to us all [CF p.152].

A letter written to Disraeli by his father sums up the doubts expressed in the novel of the poetic enterprise after Disraeli's publication of his first major political work The Vindication of the English Constitution in a Letter to a Noble and Learned Lord, by Disraeli the Younger:

**You have now a positive name and being in the great political world,...I never doubted your powers - they were not latent to me. With more management on your side they would have been acknowledged long ere now - universally. You never wanted for genius, but it was apt in its fullness to run over (20).**

**This can be compared with a passage in the novel where Baron Fleming tells his son "You have a great enemy, Contarini, a great enemy in yourself. You have a great enemy in your imagination - I think if you could control your imagination you might be a great man [CF p.151]. In the novel Contarini Fleming helps his father bring off a political "coup", at the same time writing a novel Manstein which has its author ridiculed in review, the fate of Benjamin Disraeli and his first novel Vivian Grey. This was partly the problem to which Disraeli himself was needing a solution. Was his father correct in doubting literature, if not as a profession at least as a way of getting his name known in society in order to achieve his ambitions? It is not intended to resort to a reductive psychological motive to explain the writing of his early novel, but it can be argued that this fiction was an embodiment of his fantasies about himself. He had a sense of his own genius, and chose to interpret his life through his novels as his letter to Lady Bradford in September 1875 makes clear:**

**My books are the history of my life - I don't mean a vulgar photograph of incidents, but the psychological development of my character. Self-inspiration may be egotistical, but it is generally true (21).**

**In Coningsby, the first part of the Young England trilogy, Sidonia, Coningsby's mentor is told by the hero "I should like to be a great man" (22). Young England had been the means to achieve a position that enabled Disraeli to realise this ambition, and in his Reminiscences he wrote:**

...between 1844 and 1847 when Tancred was published much had happened in my position: the Young England myth had evaporated, and I had become if not the recognised leader, at least the most influential organ, of a powerful parliamentary party (23).

Did Disraeli actually have the makings of a poet in him? In order to achieve this he needed to have his work compared with that of the successful poets such as Goethe.

It can be argued that Disraeli's interest in Goethe was increased through the medium of Edward Bulwer-Lytton the novelist and politician whose friendship with Disraeli began in 1829 (24). The trend of Bulwer-Lytton's interests in 1826 is indicated by a list of subjects he compiled for projected essays which included: "Perfectibility, The Proper Aim of Satire, Wilhelm Meister, and The Love of Improving our Fellow Creatures" (25). This was apparently the first English mention of Goethe's novel; William Godwin's theory of the perfectibility of man, from Political Justice and Jeremy Bentham's improvement of fellow human beings also interested him, and were ideas which made token appearances at the end of Contarini Fleming (26). It was the year 1832 which indicates Bulwer-Lytton's interest in things German. He had made an effort to write "metaphysical" novels and had been very influenced by Carlyle who had written a paper on Goethe for Bulwer-Lytton's New Monthly magazine. In his notice of Goethe's death in the New Monthly 1832 in one of a series of papers called Asmodeus at Large Bulwer-Lytton attempts to account for the influence of the Germans:

**This is the great merit of the books of the German Masters - ineffective in parts, the effect as a whole is wonderfully deep. Wilhelm Meister is to the knowledge of thoughts what Gil Blas is to knowledge of the world (27).**

## II

The role of the artist was one of the major themes which Bulwer-Lytton discerned in Wilhelm Meister, and he emphasised that art is predominant in the conclusion as well as in the projected visit to Italy after Mignon's death:

All in Goethe was the Artist - the great Artist - and all in Wilhelm Meister breathes of that Art, and of the time, thought, musing which had been devoted to its cultivation. (28)

The idea central to Bulwer-Lytton's thought was that fiction must instruct, an aspect of Bulwer-Lytton's ideas which Disraeli echoed: "I like a moral to peep out of the wildest invention, to assure us that, while we have been amused, we have also all the time been growing a little wiser". (29) Wilhelm Meister gave Disraeli the form in which to present the truths and guidance that he thought his generation required, and he was obviously encouraged by Bulwer-Lytton, recording in his diary that he had not "gained much in conversation with men. Bulwer is one of the few with whom my intellect comes into collision with benefit. He is full of thought, and views at once original and just" (30).

In his review of Contarini Fleming for the New Monthly, Bulwer-Lytton pointedly parallels the novel with that of Goethe:

I compare it..., to Wilhelm Meister. And I am quite certain that if Wilhelm Meister had never been written, Contarini Fleming would never have walked into the ideal world. Yet, for all that, there is no imitation in story, character, and least of all, style. The subdued calm of Goethe is as different as possible from the varying brilliance of the author of Contarini Fleming....The true nature of Mr D'Israeli talents is, on the contrary, vivid, sparkling, passionate.

The underlying thrust of the review gradually becomes clear in the last few sentences:

By the way, I see he is standing for Wycombe: - joy be with him! A man of such talent and such knowledge ought to be in Parliament, more especially when the powers he possesses are pledged to the advance of those Great Truths which are now so firmly rooted in the Hearts of the People. (31)

Bulwer-Lytton compares the novel favourably with Goethe's, yet asserts its distinctive difference, and in doing this gives it not only a high profile, but a certain authority. He was aware that literature was not the passport to the highest social success and aware too that one of Disraeli's objects in writing had been to acquire both the name and the money to sustain a parliamentary career. Bulwer-Lytton was Disraeli's sponsor in radical circles, and Disraeli contested Wycombe as a Tory radical in June 1832. Celebrity wins votes, and that Disraeli saw his literary works as a springboard to Westminster and political fame is evident from his pressing letters to John Murray his publisher:

It is with deep regret, and some mortification that I appear to press you. It is of the highest importance to me that the "PR" should appear without loss of time. I have an impending election in the country, which a single, and not improbable, event may precipitate. It is a great object with me, that my work should be published before that election. (32).

[DL I p.231]

It can be argued that Disraeli intended Contarini Fleming as a work of the imagination in that as a "Psychological Romance" it was a development of his "poetic character", but that in including a picture of political life he was able to indicate that he thought political life was only possible if the statesman was an imaginative man. In his 1845 Preface Disraeli had alluded to Goethe's



"capricious memoirs" which had given details of "his individual experience of self-formation" [CF p.ix]; Goethe's memoirs published as Dichtung und Wahrheit are evoked when Contarini Fleming, like Wilhelm Meister is influenced by his visits to the theatre. Goethe's chapter on the "French Theatre" speaks of his "passion" for it which grew with every performance: "I never missed an evening, although when I joined my family at supper after the play and often got nothing but leftovers, I had to endure my father's constant reproaches. He did not think much of the theatre: he said it was useless and could not lead to anything". (33)

Goethe used this autobiographical experience in Wilhelm Meister and contrary to Bulwer-Lytton's assertion that "there is no imitation in story", there are obvious allusions to Goethe's novel as well as the memoirs. Both Contarini Fleming and Wilhelm Meister have a restless spirit which prompts Fleming to leave school and take up unpremeditated wandering with Venice as the goal dimly in the future. Like Meister he falls in with a travelling theatre company, and the two flippant actresses Theodora and Thalia who care for him have traits of Philine and Aurelia. One of their companions with whom he leaves the company, who steals from Fleming and deserts him poses as a count named Frederick, while Goethe's Philine has a count named Friedrich as her lover.

The theatre offers an adventurous, nomadic existence and a chance to extend the self through adopting various roles for Fleming; outlaw leader, politician, writer, traveller. Fleming states "How I love the theatre! When I am at home I go in my father's box every night. I have often wished to be an actor"

**[CF p.64]. Disraeli indicates that the first time the nine year old Contarini Fleming visited the theatre was the most memorable of his life:**

**I had now a pursuit, for when I was not a spectator at the theatre, at home I was an actor. I required no audience; I was happier alone...The theatre at once fully introduced me to this new existence, and there arose accordingly in my mind new characters. Heroes succeeded to knights, tyrants to ogres, and boundless empire to enchanted castles.  
[CF p.17]. (34).**

**Disraeli shows that the true artist can live in a better world which he himself has created. Meister, too, endeavours to explain to his friend Werner in Book II, Chapter 2 that art in general, and the theatre particularly, is an answer to the dissatisfaction that man feels within the narrow confines of practical social reality:**

**What disturbs people, is that they cannot connect their ideas with things, that pleasure eludes their grasp, that what is yearned for comes too late and that everything acquired and attained fails to have the effect on their heart which desire from a distance causes it to anticipate. Fate has set the poet up above all this as if he were a god. He can see the vain turmoil of the confusion of passions, families and kingdoms,...thus the poet is at one and the same time teacher, soothsayer, and friend of gods and men. [WM I pp.76-77].**

**Art is a realm in which the real and the possible, the finite and the infinite, meet and interlock. In this sense, as becomes clear in Meister's amazement at the Hall of the Past, and Fleming's setting up his museum of art, art can allow man a glimpse of coherence and a totality that mundane, everyday experience is unable to provide.**

**Wilhelm Meister's wish/dream embodies one of the major themes of the novel which is the relationship between reality and idea, activity and reflection.**

Contarini Fleming's wish/dream is still a dream of himself as a poet "seated upon a glorious throne on a proud Acropolis, one to whom a surrounding and enthusiastic people offered a laurel crown". [CF p.63]. His devotion to art is not for art's sake, but rather as a means for gaining fame. He produces Manstein a novel about a man with a poetic temperament, but whose nature is thwarted by environment and education. Manstein is Contarini Fleming and together Manstein and the hero Contarini Fleming are the equivalent of Contarini Fleming and Disraeli. Manstein, offering a foretaste of the satirical use of real people in Coningsby is a political and social satire which set society speculating about the author, a scenario which Disraeli himself required. Contarini Fleming, Disraeli hoped, would have considerable influence on his career in the same way that Manstein was "a work which exercised a strange influence" on the destiny of Contarini Fleming. [CF p.166].

Both Fleming and Meister in their attempts at artistic pursuits, Meister's discussion of plays, and his attempts at writing like Fleming's, demonstrate the hero's immaturity as an inability to grasp the process of living. Wilhelm Meister is a pliant character in that Goethe uses him not as a potential cause of plot, but because he is necessary as the exemplary trajectory of a hero who "calm in character, simple in conduct,... did not over-relish leisure nor...all too desirous of occupation," [WM II p.19] leaves to others the task of shaping his life. He reasons that he needs some outside force to determine his choices in life.

Wilhelm Meister is episodic in the sense that the hero wanders through experience without any precise idea of where he is going, while in Contarini Fleming there is a much more thrusting and selfish approach. However Disraeli borrowed the figure who offers guidance in a cryptic form for living life from Goethe. The episodic Meister is opposed by apparent cohesion and order, for on several occasions Meister receives advice in the form of mysterious intimations from unknown figures who are apparently watching over him. Disraeli transforms "the figure" into the character Chevalier de Winter, a great artist of philosophical bent and great experience and wisdom. He is engaged by Disraeli to penetrate the hidden springs of Contarini Fleming's character, and to recognise his poetic gift. However he teaches him that before he can hope to be a great artist he must study his art, producing a set of talismanic rules which he had "copied off an obelisk amid the ruins of Thebes":-

Be patient: cherish hope. Read more: ponder less. Nature is more powerful than education: time will develop everything. [CF p.57].

This is an instance of Bulwer-Lytton's influence on Disraeli. Bulwer-Lytton himself borrowed from Goethe the portrait of the young man who must learn patience to allow his artistic genius to mature, and used it in his novel The Disowned (1828).

Goethe institutionalised genius through the novel Die Leiden des jungen Werthers, (1774), in which madness becomes crucial to any definition of personal authenticity. Genius was not normal and was distanced from the everyday through extremities of behaviour. The literary hero was a man of feeling and

sensibility, and exceptionally gifted in the arts. Certain actions will always remain morally wrong but they are too far removed from the existential basis of action for Werther:

"Oh, you rationalists!" I cried with a smile.  
"Passion! Drunkenness! Madness! You stand there so calm, so unsympathetic, you moral men!....

"But even in ordinary life it is unendurable to hear men exclaim in response to almost any halfway deliberate, noble, unexpected deed: the fellow is drunk, he is crazy! Shame on you sober ones, shame on you sage ones!" (35).

The desire for order is evident in Werther. Goethe's emphasis is that the rationalists are no longer to be regarded as the representatives of common humanity, for their rationalism isolates them from the reality of human suffering and feeling.

Werther's state is one of permanent contradiction and confusion which precludes action. Although Goethe makes it clear that Werther pays the price for disharmony in his spirit, Goethe also condemns the institutional structure of bourgeois marriage and the rigid, inflexible, hierarchical court which thwarts Werther's free spirit. Werther's art, however, is not to be a communication with the outside world, and he makes no attempt to establish contact with the real world around him. He reflects that he might be creating his own image of the world, and as time progresses Werther runs to Homer and the classical world which was equated with nature in the mood of serenity which evoked, along with Old Testament scenes, an image of a Golden Age of patriarchal simplicity.

Homer will thus not stimulate, but rather lull Werther towards the peace of childhood with its patriarchal world. Goethe's warning in Werther is that the artistic temperament is doomed if it is based only on self-absorption and not on a relationship of individual with the outside world.

The classical world of Italy, Contarini Fleming's artistic, maternal goal, is also the country of culture and "Selbstbildung" for Bulwer-Lytton's hero. Contarini Fleming determines to be patient, but the first book which he reads, A History of Venice, reawakens his love of action and he aspires to become a Doge "sitting on his golden throne" for his "consular blood demands a sword". The history has disclosed that there are four families of pre-eminent ancestry, and of these "the unrivalled race of Contarini was the chief". [CF pp.57-58]. One of the thematic developments in Contarini Fleming is the ambivalence Disraeli feels about the conflicting awareness of himself. The Protestant northern realm of Scandinavia and his father's political life offers Contarini Fleming the opportunity of fulfilling dreams of social and political ambition and success. The Catholic realm of Venice of Contarini Fleming's deceased mother offers him personal fulfilment and love, but the two spheres are seen to be mutually exclusive.

Disraeli owned a copy of Mme de Staël's De Allemagne (1810), which proposed that there were two dominant cultural traditions in Europe - the pessimistic, introspective and essentially religious literature of the North, in particular Germany, and the classical, Mediterranean alternative expressed in

comedy. (36) From about the time it was first translated into English in 1813, liberal English writers such as Shelley, believed they were fighting for their political principles, and after 1817 the thrust of writing came from the south.

Fleming vacillates between aspirations of power and greatness and the life of an artist creating beauty. His desire for both kinds of success is the source of ambivalence about the recognition he will get from success in either field.

Baron Fleming's advice that he should read Voltaire evokes the following response:

I drew out Zadig. Never shall I forget the effect this work produced on me. What I had long been seeking offered itself. This strange mixture of brilliant fantasy and poignant truth, this unrivalled blending of ideal creation and worldly wisdom, it all seemed to speak to my two natures. I wandered a poet in the streets of Babylon, or on the banks of the Tigris. A philosopher and a statesman. I moralised over the condition of man and the nature of government. [CF p.121].

Wilhelm Meister's mentors encourage him to take responsibility for others, whereas Winter says nothing about responsibility for others or about action in the service of society. He travels through Turkey, Syria, Jerusalem and Spain after the death of his wife Alcesté in childbirth and his own abortive suicide attempt by jumping off Mount Ida. Winter exhorts Fleming to "renounce meditation":

**Action is now your part. Meditation is culture. It is well to think until a man has discovered his genius, and developed his faculties, but then let him put his intelligence in motion. Act, act, act; act without ceasing, and you will no longer talk of the vanity of life. [CF p.361].**

**Throughout the work a rhetoric reminiscent of Carlyle's underpins the fabric, and Fleming's enquiry about how he should act receives the reply "Create. Man is made to create, from the poet to the potter". Early in the narrative he had shown an interest at University in forming "The Secret Union for the Amelioration of Society". While this reflects Bulwer-Lytton's interests influencing Disraeli, it is also an episode lifted from Schiller's Die Räuber.**

**This episode is used to accentuate Contarini Fleming's "outsider" status, and is one of the many battles against society which Disraeli's hero has in common with Stendhal's Julien Sorel. He is not trying to integrate himself into society, but leading a faction in heroic/chivalric fashion outside it:**

**I was surrounded by human beings bold and trusty, who looked only to my command, and I was to direct them in danger and guide them through peril. No child's game was this, no ideal play. We were at war, and at war with mankind. [CF p.129].**

**In his Lectures on Aesthetics Hegel noted Schiller's chief point in Die Räuber is that "every individual man bears within himself the capacity for ideal manhood". (37). However Karl von Moor feels contempt for the age in which he lives, and the injustice he suffers from his family; both cause him to rebel against this conception of universal harmony. He rebels in the name of freedom and nature, but the conventions of the age frequently bar the way, and in fact he divorces himself from nature and the harmony which exists in nature. Hegel argues that**



Schiller holds that the "genuine man" is represented by the state "which he takes to be the objective, universal, and as it were canonical, form in which the diversity of individual persons aims at collecting and combining itself into a unity. Now he thought that there were two ways of presenting how man, living in time, might correspond with man in the Idea: on the one hand, the State, as the genus of ethics, law, and intelligence, might cancel individuality; on the other hand the individual might raise himself into the man of the Idea..." (38). Fleming and some fellow students leave determined to set up an ideal society, "founded upon the eternal principles of truth and justice", but with Disraeli's tendency to the philosophy of the superior individual Fleming makes the transition from the students' Philosophical President to the captain of the "corps of bandits".

Disraeli's emphasis is different from Goethe's; for Disraeli the epitome of self-development is creative activity, not responsibility for others. The main narrative is concerned with a hostile environment in which a poet lives his youth. But there is no real apprenticeship to art and little emphasis on living in society. Goethe established the nature of the artist in Wilhelm Meister by drawing a portrait of what an artist is not. He is no artist at all despite writing poetry, seeing himself as an actor and adapting Hamlet for the stage. Goethe shows the idea of self-development as a necessary preliminary to the development of society. That capacity is inborn - but it must be cultivated and the individual must strive for balance between action and thought. Towards the end of Wilhelm Meister Goethe writes that "Someone who is capable of much development will receive an enlightenment later about himself and the world. There are only a few who are

thoughtful and at the same time capable of action. Thought has an amplifying effect, but is disabling; action brings life but is limiting" [WM III p.110]. This is an idea which seems to have been taken up by Disraeli in order to justify cultivating his own character of Contarini Fleming without particular regard for the anti-imaginative society of which he was a part, but it also enabled him to claim the right of leadership. Shelley's notion of poets and artists as the "unacknowledged legislators of the world", which implies leadership by virtue of a heightened capacity for imagination, may owe something to Goethe.

### III

Both Contarini Fleming and Wilhelm Meister uncertainly explore social space through travel and adventure. The destabilising forces of capitalism dismantled the continuity between generations and allowed mobility; both Meister and Fleming yearn for exploration since the process of destabilisation gave rise to hopes, and consequently generated an inferiority which rendered them both dissatisfied and restless. Towards the end of the eighteenth century youth was a symbol of Europe's transition to modernity, and accentuated its dynamism and instability. Youth was the essence of the time looking for a meaning in the future rather than the past. Wilhelm Meister was the new hero, having this in common with heroes such as Contarini Fleming and Stendhal's Julien Sorel.

In an article Mr Disraeli's Novels for the Fortnightly Review (1874)

Leslie Stephen noted this point:

...the most interesting of all objects to Mr Disraeli, if one may judge from his books is a precocious youth whose delight in the sudden consciousness of great abilities has not been dashed by experience...A novelist who adopts the common practice of painting from himself naturally finds out the merits of middle age in his later work. (39).

Stephen observes that Disraeli makes all his central characters a youth modelled closely on his own perceived abilities, a youth who is "frequently a statesman at school, and astonished the world before he has reached his majority".

At the same time that the critics were praising Contarini Fleming for its "German" qualities, they were also, many years before Stephen, pointing out

its autobiographical element. The Literary Gazette judged it an "original work" and one that was:

...evidently the idealised history of its author;...by idealised, we mean a fiction in which real feelings and actual scenes are blended with imaginary adventure. We cannot for a moment doubt that the writer and part original of Contarini Fleming, is Mr D'Israeli, junior...a young man who, with all his faults, it were a strange injustice to confound with "the common people" of our literary "sky" (40).

The Spectator highlighted the autobiographical element of the novel with particular reference to Disraeli's travels:

The author we may suppose to be the writer of Vivian Grey: who has used this vehicle for rapidly introducing us to his travelled observations on Italy, Greece and Egypt. We have no authority for this guess beyond internal evidence. The hero is in fact a German Vivian Grey, with a dash of the Venetian, to qualify him to run in romance. (41).

Rather like Vivian Grey, Contarini Fleming becomes something of a travelogue, but Disraeli uses this to draw out the stark contrast between the Sweden of his father and Italy of his mother in order to reflect the hero's conflict between the practical affairs of politics and the poetic imagination. It is in this area that the autobiographical element comes to the fore, as Disraeli's letters to his family, and particularly one to his mother from Granada (August 1st, 1830) is transposed almost in its entirety in Part 5, Chapters 6 and 7 of the novel. [DL I Letter 94 pp.140-144]. Contarini Fleming reaches Mount Jura on Friday, 18th August, 1826 the same day as Disraeli himself did [DL I Letter 51 pp.69-72].

Neither Vivian Grey nor Contarini Fleming can be trusted literally for autobiographical details; but Disraeli had identified himself with Contarini Fleming in assigning to him many of his own personal experiences. (42). He had

written the following passage in his Mutilated Diary in 1833 after the publication of Contarini Fleming and his double defeat at the Wycombe election:

My life has not been a happy one. Nature has given me an awful ambition and fiery passions....With fair health I have no doubt of success, but the result will probably be fatal to my life. My disposition is now indolent. I wish to be idle, and enjoy myself, muse over the stormy past, and smile at the placid present. My career will probably be more energetic than ever, and the world will wonder at my ambition. Alas I struggle from Pride. Yes it is Pride that now prompts me, not Ambition. They shall not say I have failed. (43).

However despite his failure at the elections the novel had been noticed and widely "praised" and "blamed" with Disraeli's ambition to have it published and reviewed by the critics prior to the elections realised. But the problem with the reviews he complained was that "not one of the writers has the slightest idea of the nature or purposes of the work....Tom Campbell...., is delighted with it "I shall review it myself and it will be a psychological review" he exclaims". [DL I, Letter 194, pp.281-282].

The novel, in Disraeli's view, was a guide to his own psychology as he saw it retrospectively. He analysed the "I" through fiction rather than autobiography, and the projection of his personality into a work of art also offered a means of self knowledge superior to direct introspection. The "purpose of the work" was to create a self which would persuade himself and his readers that he was an artist destined for imaginative leadership. As Goethe pointed out in his essay on Byron's autobiographical Don Juan "if a false reflection does not exactly give back the original picture to us, yet it makes us attentive at least to the mirror itself and to its more or less perceptible defects". (44).

The popular view is that Byron invented the myth of himself as the archetypal Romantic Poet. It has been argued (45) that Byron enlarged his personal myth, developed in earlier work by placing it in the wider context of European politics of 1809-1812. In Childe Harold (1812) personal aspects of an individual's life are affected by both the social and political context in which the individual is placed and each individual is more affected by events, places and people than is imagined. The period 1789-1824 is examined in Don Juan in terms of its three dominant phases: the early years of the French Revolution (the poem's displaced fiction); the Napoleonic Wars which are viewed through Byron's analogous and contemporary experience of those years, and the European restoration. Don Juan is thus a book of the European world, a comprehensive survey and explanation of the principal phases of the epoch 1789-1824. It becomes a mirror of the European world by becoming a book about the author meditating and commenting upon his own life and revealing the meaning of his age. Byron is the hero of Don Juan because it is the history of 1789-1824 which is set and framed in terms of Byron's history. Like Contarini Fleming, Don Juan's fictional movements retrace actual places and scenes which Disraeli and Byron passed through. The narration of Contarini Fleming digresses and ruminates on Disraeli's career to comment on, judge it and project it. Disraeli's life is related in fiction, but unlike Byron, in Contarini Fleming Disraeli does not give us the glimpse of an entire epoch in its detail. He was to leave this until Coningsby. However both Byron and Disraeli made the point that there was a perpetual dialectic of the individual mind in its social world. (46).

For the Romantic poets art was no longer imitation but rather the self-creation of the artist. The human self is created by the use of a vocabulary rather than being adequately or inadequately expressed in a vocabulary, and this was the basis for the Romantic idea that truth was made rather than found.

Contarini Fleming expresses the need to write a book "which shall be all truth":

...a work of which the passion, the thought, the action, and even the style, should spring from my own experience of feeling, from the meditations of my own intellect, from my own observation of incident, from my own study of the genius of expression.... [CF p.3].

What was important was that the idea of intrinsic nature was replaced by the contingency of language used; only sentences could be true. Human beings make truths by making languages in which to phrase it. The French revolutionaries, the Romantic poets and the German idealists seemed to express the notion that there is no enduring human nature that has been suppressed by "irrational" social institutions, but rather that changing language and other social practices could produce a type of human being who has not existed before. It can be argued that they had in common a sense that those people whose language changed so that they would no longer speak of themselves as responsible to non-human powers would consequently become a new kind of person.

The Romantics saw that anything could be made to seem important or unimportant by being redescribed - what Hegel described as the process of spirit gradually becoming self conscious of its intrinsic nature can be described as European language changing. Disraeli's claim that imagination, rather than reason, was the central human faculty, is the realisation that a talent for speaking

differently, rather than arguing well was the chief instrument of cultural change. Disraeli's own individual sense of what was possible and important for him was what made him different from others. To lose that difference was what any writer feared - they and their work would not be distinctive; their creations and their selves would be just better or worse examples of familiar types, what Harold Bloom terms "the strong poet's anxiety of influence", his "horror of finding himself to be only a copy or a replica" (47). In order to ensure his public recognised the difference and this distinctiveness between himself and others, Disraeli wrote his novels to demonstrate that he was not a copy or replica of other writers such as Byron or Goethe. Bloom writes that if his argument is correct "...then the covert subject of most poetry for the last three centuries had been the anxiety of influence, each poet's fear that no proper work remains for him to perform". (48).

Self-consciousness can be seen as self-creation. If Disraeli was writing to discover himself, the self-discovery, the sort of self-knowledge he gained was not a coming to know a truth which was outside himself. Rather self-knowledge was his self-creation. The process of coming to know himself and confronting his contingency was identical with the process of inventing a new language - that is thinking up new metaphors. Any literal description of his individuality would have failed, for he would not have traced his idiosyncrasy home, but merely managed to see it not as idiosyncratic at all, but as a copy or replica of something which had already been identified. His obsession with himself as a potential genius produced a metaphor which the society in which he lived could accept -



perhaps we can speak of "genius" rather than eccentricity. The difference between his "genius" and fantasy was the difference between idiosyncrasies which happened because of the contingencies of the historical situation. Disraeli's political progress was the result of the accidental coincidence of his private obsession with the public need, and hero-worship was a phenomenon of the nineteenth century and the Victorian era in particular; Carlyle in Lecture 4 of Heroes and Hero-Worship argued that it was the "basis of all possible good, religious or social, for mankind". The pre-requisites of the conception of a superior being, such as enthusiasm, the popularity of the works of Scott, and Napoleon as leader were already in place. Heroic myth and heroic biography, tales of medieval knights and Greek, Roman and Celtic myth were widely read and reproduced too in the poetry of Arnold and Tennyson. The enjoyment of stories of heroism and the worship of heroes tended to merge, having grown out of the same intellectual and social milieu, and encouraged each other. It was a phenomenon which was nourished and consequently thrived and became a major element in that transitional age which was seeking guidance from a hero-teacher.

Disraeli undoubtedly saw himself as both a hero and an artist of equal status with Byron, but in no way a copy of him. John Murray's reader was the critic Henry Hart Milman who praised Contarini Fleming prior to publication (49). Milman, who, although he thought the novel "very wild, very extravagant", thought too it would be "much admired, and much abused", and termed it "a Childe Harold in prose" (50). Disraeli interpreted this praise very freely and, anxious to stress the poetic status of his work, wrote to Benjamin Austen:

**Mr Murray's critic who is no less a personage than Mr Milman, of all men most capable of deciding, has written that I have produced a work "in no way inferior to Childe Harold and equally calculated to arrest public attention even in these times" [DL I Letter 155, pp.242-243].**

**Freud claimed that every human life was a working out of a sophisticated idiosyncratic fantasy. Disraeli needed to demonstrate that he was not a copy or replica of Goethe or of Byron which involved coming to terms with the life which chance had given him to make a self for himself by redescribing that life in terms which were his own. Contarini Fleming as "autobiography" or the "autobiographical form" as Disraeli termed it [CF pp.ix-x] here no longer meant a biography of a person written by that same person, but a biography of an imaginary being composed with living elements borrowed from the nature and experience of the author.**

**People who "want to become those they are" are "human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves" according to Nietzsche (51). Thus Spake Zarathustra is constructed around the idea of creating one's self or the "Übermensch", which is the same objective. Both Zarathustra and his disciples are described as "creators", and in Twilight of the Idols Nietzsche paid Goethe, one of his few heroes, a compliment in writing of him that "he created himself". The problem is that if the self must be created, how can that self be what one is before it comes into being itself, and how could that self be what one properly is and not some other self? But in The Will to Power the idea of "the subject as multiplicity" emerges:**

The assumption of one single subject is perhaps unnecessary; perhaps it is just as permissible to assume a multiplicity of subjects, whose interaction and struggle is the basis of our thought and our consciousness in general? A kind of aristocracy of "cells" in which dominion resides? To be sure, an aristocracy of equals, used to ruling jointly and understanding how to command? (52).

It was his ability to control this multiplicity that Goethe, who tried "to form a totality out of himself, in the faith that only in the totality everything redeems itself and appears justified", (53) and whom Nietzsche thought bore all the conflicting tendencies of his age within him, became his hero: "what he wanted was totality.....he disciplined himself to wholeness, he created himself". (54).

Disraeli, Proust-like, wrote Contarini Fleming with his hero at the end sufficiently able to comprehend the trajectory of his own life that he can write the novel which was to thrust him more firmly into the public eye. The narrator of Proust's Remembrance of Things Past creates himself, out of everything that has happened to him, in his own writing. The narrator believes "that in fashioning a work of art we are by no means free, that we do not choose how we shall make it but that it pre-exists and therefore we are obliged, since it is both necessary and hidden, to do what we should have to do if it were a law of nature, that is to say to discover it" (55).

The suggestion is that what Marcel calls "the discovery of our true life" can be made only in the very process of creating the work of art which describes and constitutes it. The creation of the self appears to be an imposition of a higher level of aspiration on everyday thought, desire and action and the

development of the ability to accept responsibility for one's actions. Therefore everything that has been done actually constitutes who the self is. To become what he was for Disraeli was not to reach a specific new state and to stop becoming; it was rather not to reach a state at all. He identified himself with all his actions, and saw that everything he did, (what he became), was what he was. It gave style to his character.

Disraeli began with the recollections of early childhood on the Wordsworthian assumption that the child was father of the man. Memory is the principle agent of integration in which past feeling comes to the aid of the writer in the present (56). Although, like all autobiographies, the memory is highly selective, and Disraeli rejected much and stressed themes of most importance to the self-portrait. For Contarini Fleming, Disraeli quarried his childhood, particularly for the portrait of his father, and Isaac D'Israeli's rejection of the profession of poet for Disraeli, but he embellished and embroidered dramatically. The appeal of the "Bildungsroman", and such autobiographical works as Contarini Fleming, lay in the author's capacity to make his development seem unique, but, at the same time, representative. An author needs to "get beyond ego in order to become the voice of more than autobiography" (57), and in for example The Prelude, the egotism is transcended by the larger relevance of the work; there is an assumption that the authorial voice speaks for every man, and that the growth of the poet's own mind can reveal characteristics of the whole mind of man. In Contarini Fleming, Disraeli's authorial voice speaks to every

man, but in order to demonstrate that he is one of an elite, that he is a poet and a statesman whose mind is out of the ordinary.

Disraeli's hero Byron traced the progress from boyhood to the edge of maturity of an unheroic hero in Don Juan; he travelled through corrupt society, eventually sophisticated by his exploits. This is the portrait of the artist concerned with politics as well as art itself - the Byronic persona can view his younger self, the hero Juan, with an ironic detachment while by the later cantos the maturing hero turns his irony on the weakness of the English aristocracy. Disraeli was to do this in his more socially aware Young England trilogy, and particularly Coningsby and Sybil.

#### IV

Although it would not have been available to Disraeli at the time, Wordsworth's The Prelude published posthumously in 1850 and Byron's Don Juan have strong similarities with the autobiographical "Bildungsroman" for which Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre was the paradigm. It was, however, Stendhal who anticipates later developments in the "Bildungsroman" genre, especially the increase in autobiographical self-consciousness, as well as the sharpening of focus on the motivation of the hero. He sought to create a coherent self-image through both fiction and autobiography; his La Vie de Henri Brulard is a detailed account of his own childhood and adolescence (58).

Stendhal views his past self as another person, like Byron, through irony and self-mockery. Henri Brulard despises his father and rebels against him. Like Disraeli he insists on his loneliness as a child, his distance from his school fellows, greater sensitivity to beauty and suffering, and his awareness of social hypocrisies in order to emerge as the wise and humane author. Their shared Romantic tendencies were the cult of the superior individual in revolt against society and its ideology, although there is no evidence to show that Disraeli had actually read any of Stendhal's work. Certainly no copies of his works are in the Disraeli library at Hughenden. English translations of Stendhal's works did not begin to circulate widely until the 1920's. The first English translation of Le rouge et le noir was by E.P. Robins as Red and Black in

1898 (59). However, despite this there are many coincidences in their work, even if there is no direct influence evident.

Stendhal's autobiographical work reveals the psychological reasons which turned him towards the novel and which caused him, not to renounce the examination of his ego, but to look for balance in imaginative affirmation and utilise his ego for external ends. In La Vie de Henri Brulard he wrote "at bottom, dear reader, I do not know what I am: good, wicked, witty, foolish. What I know perfectly is what things give me pain or pleasure, what things I want or hate". Stendhal tries to know himself in giving priority to tendencies rather than qualifications. Early in adolescence he had pursued attempts at being a man of action and an artist, and much later on in his career it is Julien Sorel, the hero of Le rouge et le noir, who is Stendhal's paradigm of the hero of imagination and ambition who would be dissatisfied with a mediocre life within the bourgeoisie, such as his friend Fouqué suggests.

In 1828 Disraeli wrote to his godfather Sharon Turner "Whether I shall ever do anything which may mark me out from the crowd I know not. I am one of those to whom moderate reputation can give no pleasure, and who, in all probability am incapable of achieving a great one". [DL I, Letter 66, p.103]. Early on in his career Disraeli had articulated his derision for "moderate reputation", a term of abuse which he was to use in his fight against Sir Robert Peel who "had a great deficiency; he was without imagination" (60). "Mediocrity" was a word which appeared many times in Coningsby when referring to

politicians Disraeli held in contempt, such as Lord Castlereagh who was "a most distinguished Mediocrity" (61). This scorn for mediocre men lacking imagination seems to be the key to Disraeli's character and career (62).

The portrait Stendhal draws of Julien Sorel, "paradigme exalté" of all those whose hopes lay essentially in "La carrière ouverte aux talents" (63) is the son of a small sawmill proprietor of peasant stock. He represents the ambition of the "petit bourgeois" with talents and aspirations above his birth and fortune. Stendhal claims Le rouge et noir is "une chronique du xix siècle" and is the story of Julien's frustration under the Restoration, and its attempts to restrict office again to the old "notables" and their nominees. Stendhal thought that in the future all great men would come from the "petit bourgeois". We learn that "Rousseau's Confessions [was] the only book that had helped his [Julien's] imagination to form a picture of society". This, together with "....a collection of bulletins of the Grand Army and the Mémorial de Saint-Hélène....", was Sorel's "manual of conduct" which he used to make his way in the world. [SB p.40].

Although this is a portrait of life in the Ultra-Royalist society which wanted a return to the Ancien Régime, Stendhal's attack on society is levelled against the "mediocrities" who directed the tone of public opinion, rather than against a particular political ideology. A person was judged:

.....in the light of public opinion...., which is formed by all those fools who chance to be born noble, rich and mediocre. Woe to the man who stands against the rest. [SB p.164].



**Helvétius's theories accounted for the man of genius admired by Stendhal.**

**Stendhal thought genius of all kinds was nothing other than an "extra strong dose of common sense" which was obtained through observation and reflection.**

**Success lay in the single-minded pursuit of an objective. He gained from**

**Helvétius the dictum that the search for pleasure was the motivating force behind**

**human action, and that morality is founded on self-interest - Julien Sorel's last**

**thoughts on the nature of life lead him to conclude that "the men whom people**

**honour are only rogues who have had the good fortune not to be caught red-**

**handed". [SB p.500] (64).**

Exceptional men like Danton and Napoleon were products of their time, rather than its architects, as Julien Sorel is a direct product of his age, and works out his own destiny within society, with his only support his force of character and "genius". To his mind he is not only formed by society, but is a special being, an angry social misfit, "the plebeian in revolt" against society and its ideology. Stendhal recognised that different times made different men, and he links Julien Sorel with such men of energy and will as Napoleon, with his humble background, Danton, Mirabeau and Richelieu (of whom there is a bust in his room at the Hôtel de la Môle).

Julien Sorel leaves Verrières on a quest, the passionate, sensitive soul searching for happiness. Julien Sorel and Contarini Fleming see happiness only in terms of the realisation of ambition, and both become single-minded egotists. Stendhal's implied criticism is that Julien Sorel is living a modified copy of someone else's life and that happiness evades him precisely because he is trying to live up to an alien ideal, although of course, this in turn implies that the individual can, and does, mould his own life.

Agnes Heller in Everyday Life defines an individual as a particularity that "tends towards self-preservation, and subordinates everything else to this self-preservation" (65). She appropriates Hegel's idea of the "world historical individual" and opposes particularity to what she defines as an individuality. It is

the "individualities" who become "representative individualities". Hegel had written that "These great men seem to follow only their passions, their free will, but what they want is the universal, and this is their pathos". So consequently:

It was not happiness they chose but exertion, conflict, and labour in the service of their end. And even when they reached their goal, peaceful enjoyment and happiness was not their lot. Their actions are their entire being.... The fearful consolation (is) that the great men of history did not enjoy what is called happiness (66).

The great men of history were not representative of ordinary times, but rather of society's major historical crises and acquisitions. The "great man", such as Disraeli wished to be, was an agent of a higher purpose moving him towards a goal of which he was rarely fully aware. Hegel judged the great men, not by their motives, but by the objective result of their work. The role of the individual in history was, in Hegel's work, strongly linked to changes in political structure and since the political order was separate from the historical circumstances in which it came into being, he had no problem in presenting historical states as originating in the act of a great man, rather than in contract. The "world historical individual" had a central place in historical development as an agent of change, innovation and upheaval, while conversely he was a mere instrument in the hands of superior forces; his own views and ideas of little importance.

Ambition rather than an overall view of historical destiny may have motivated Napoleon, yet the hidden hand of reason managed to fit ambitions into a wider perspective. Ambition, greed and passion are viewed as the agents of reason working in history. The historical hero then is viewed differently from the

reverence accorded by Carlyle. The personal fate of these great men is also of secondary importance; in terms of their own goals, these individuals often end in failure, but it is what they have accomplished which counts. It was precisely this reason that Disraeli was not a representative of his society, his actions were his "entire being".

In Gallomania (1832) he wrote that he was neither a Whig nor a Tory and that his politics were described only by the word "England". Until 1835 he was willing to stand for any political creed and seek votes from almost any quarter. He was never a radical partisan and always sought a broad and popular base on which authority and the country's stability could be restored. He wished to achieve his political object to climb "to the top of the greasy pole", as he termed it, and ambition can be seen as the motivating force of his life, whether or not he might fail in this ambition. His striving for recognition can be seen as analogous to Hegel's paradox of consolation.

Contarini Fleming and Julien Sorel are in thrall to the world historical model of Napoleon, and take part in plots with events structured round clashes with the existing order; Contarini Fleming states that he "already emulated Napoleon". [CF p.111]. The "representative" of ordinary society in the classical "Bildungsroman", such as Wilhelm Meister, does not want "exertion, conflict, and labour in the service of his end", but these conflicts certainly take place in Le rouge et le noir and Contarini Fleming. Wilhelm Meister, on the other hand, like a particularity defined by Agnes Heller, takes part in the opposite of a conflictual

plot, one of organic integration. He seeks personal happiness, "wants to find his place in the world" and looks for "a life which is reasonable for him" (67).

Napoleon is the ambitious, dynamic hero who dominated the nineteenth century, the representative individual of what Lukács terms a "problematic" age:

In an age of constitutive systems, the exemplary significance of an individual life could never be anything more than an example: to represent it as the vehicle of values rather than as their substratum, assuming even that such a project might have been conceived, would have been an act of the most ridiculous arrogance (68).

Each value is opposed by one of equal importance - desire for freedom conflicts with aspirations for happiness, love with career, interests with ideals. Both Contarini Fleming and Julien Sorel despise their societies, and both answer the question of what does it mean to develop in such a world by abandoning any idea of happiness. Contarini Fleming's view is that when he examines "the state of European society with the impassioned spirit which the philosopher can alone command," he perceives that it is in "a state of transition from feudal (sic) to federal principles". He might have the "amelioration" of fellow men at heart, but it was as an ambitious and glory-seeking Napoleon that he wanted the "destruction of error and the propagation of truth". He wanted to be remembered "as one who, in a sad night of gloomy ignorance and savage bigotry was prescient of the flaming morning-break of bright philosophy". [CF pp.363-364].

Each novel revolves around the individual destiny of its hero. In De l'esprit Helvétius shows that an individual destiny and the public interest can be

unified by passions "similar to volcanoes which unexpectedly change the course of a river with their sudden eruptions", and through love of glory, where individual energy leads to the common good. Helvétius saw that passion was embodied in "great men" who enable the progress of mankind (69), defeating "the forces of idleness and inertia" (70). This is reflected by Disraeli when he writes of Contarini Fleming's hopes for the "perfectibility of his fellow men" [CF p.364]. Glory, energy and passion are values in Stendhal's Le rouge et le noir which disintegrate and clash; there is no attempt to identify private and public spheres, but rather concentrates on their conflictual relationship to see whether a balance can be struck. Wilhelm Meister finds the solution in the world of "sociability", in which mediation eliminates the one-sided aspect of public and private life, while dialectic synthesis collapses in Contarini Fleming and Le rouge et le noir, and the works explore the opposites of a wholly public existence and a strictly private passion.

All three works, however, have in common the fact that Wilhelm Meister, Contarini Fleming and Julien Sorel feel they cannot be what they want to be; there is a gap between subjective desires and objective possibilities which makes their socialisation problematic. For Meister the problem arises from having been born in the wrong class, for Julien Sorel from being born a few years too late in the wrong era. Sorel is tied to the values of an historical period that is over, and is faced with two choices; he can remain faithful to those values and accept his exclusion from the new context, or openly betray those values, thus achieving a satisfactory social position. He believes the church to be the only

career where a man of modest means can make his mark under the Restoration and embarks on a career for which he has no vocation other than ambition. He is false to his inclinations and nature, but observes this to be true of society in general.

Contarini Fleming confesses his "predisposition" that he possessed for "literary invention", but "owns" that his "ambition is great", and becomes his great statesman father's private secretary because he wants "Fame, although not posthumous fame" which is he feels "necessary to [his] felicity". [CF pp.152-153]. Disraeli concludes the chapter with the line "This same evening I consigned my tragedy to the flames". Fleming thus compromises his natural inclination towards writing in order to achieve fame by the easy route of patronage by his father, a point which Disraeli made in his preface to the novel in 1845: "the author then endeavoured to conceive a character whose position in life should be at variance, and, as it were, in constant conflict with his temperament" [CF p.x]. He becomes like Julien Sorel a callous and unscrupulous man who "gloried in secretly believing" himself to be "the most callous of men" and that nothing should tempt him to compromise his "absorbing selfism" [CF p.154]. However he becomes a character so distinguished that within a few years he is Under-Secretary of State. Audacity wins him diplomatic success which opens up the world and he sees that he can attain his ambition. However his triumphant feelings are interiorized and have nothing to do with interaction with others in the world, rather Fleming is characterised by solitude and love of self. His success at a conference of European statesmen provokes the thoughts:

**I was alone. I was excited. I felt the triumph of success. I felt that I had done a great action. I felt all my energies. I walked up and down the hall in a frenzy of ambition, and I thirsted for action. There seemed to be no achievement of which I was not capable, and of which I was not ambitious. In imagination I shook thrones and founded empires.... [CF p.173]**

**Individual autonomy and social integration are for Julien Sorel and Contarini Fleming not two aspects of a single course as for Wilhelm Meister who loses his freedom but gains happiness, but incompatible choices. Theirs is a choice for identity. What makes Sorel and Fleming interesting is their forsaking of an ideal not due to a change in inner conviction, but in deference to the spirit of the age. They are representatives of the modern type of hypocrisy which is due to opportunism. Julien Sorel is a poor peasant from the Jura who keeps repeating:**

**"I, condemned always to wear this dismal black coat! Alas, twenty years ago, I should have worn a uniform....In those days a man of my sort was either killed, or a general at six and thirty". The letter, which he kept tightly clasped in his hand, gave him the bearing and pose of a hero. "Nowadays, it is true, with the said black coat, at the age of forty, a man has emoluments of one hundred thousand francs and the Blue Riband, like the Bishop of Beauvais - "Oh, well!" he said to himself, laughing like Mephistopheles. "I have more sense than they; I know how to choose the uniform of my generation [SB II.43].**

**It seems that neither hero is interested in the laws of social life, but in their violation; the individual's formation is not identified with the hero's absorption within the rules of society, but with Contarini Fleming and Julien Sorel's attempts to undermine them, which is an overturning of the "Bildungsroman" form, for individualisation and socialisation are no longer complementary processes but antithetical.**



Wilhelm Meister acts in a certain way because of who he is whereas Julien Sorel and Contarini Fleming act in order to be. Jean Starobinski in Stendhal Pseudonyme (71) shows that Stendhal's characters are basically "dynamic" and "theatrical" which means that they incline to unnaturalness and "parody". It is a paradox that in order to be "himself", Disraeli's and Stendhal's heroes must, first of all, be an emphatic "other", a scarcely believable "ideal". Conflict is what makes individualisation possible (72), and "ideal" models such as Napoleon are put forward by civilisation, but which are significantly "in conflict" with its actual functioning; Julien Sorel dreams of Napoleon in order not to be a petty bourgeois of Verrières and Contarini Fleming to achieve fame at any price. From the age of eleven Fleming has a "deep conviction that life must be intolerable" unless he was "the greatest of men" [CF pp.28-29] feeling that within him he had "the power that could influence" his fellow men; he longed to "wave his inspiring sword at the head of armies". Through the force of his eloquence his school friends were "only beings whom I was determined to control" [CF p.23] and his poetic imagination invented beings as an army destined to "go forth to the world to delight and to conquer" [CF p.39]. His father encouraged him to model himself on really great men: "that is to say -, men of great energies and violent volition, who look upon their fellow-creatures as mere tools, with which they can build up a pedestal for their solitary statue..." [CF p.111]. Even when Contarini Fleming rejects his political career and elopes with Alceste for the period of idyllic bliss on the island of Candia, as a poet he is still determined to "produce some lasting creation" [CF p.262]; being

an artist has "converted" him "from a worldling into a philosopher" [CF p.262], seeing that through poetry "with words we govern men" [CF p.99] (73).

Success then is creativity, tenacity, determination, exercise of freedom and ability to control events, but it is also the abandoning of defeated ideals and complicity with an existing order as a heightening of inequalities. Contarini Fleming's assertion of "progress" is devalued in that success is possible only in a world where most men are condemned to be unsuccessful. This is a long way from Wilhelm Meister in which Meister's identity existed in its ability to objectify, and therefore disclose itself. Sorel and Fleming operate in the area of interiority, withdrawing to an area not only different, but hostile to public behaviour; both have a double life (74). There is a gap between Sorel and Fleming as individuals, and what they believe themselves to be, entailing the principle of failure. Both commit "metaphysical crimes". Julien Sorel's crime is to be out of his class, and feeling he cannot be what he wants, while Contarini Fleming is a politician who wants to be an artist. "Crime" and failure for each protagonist is having turned his back on his true nature which he renounced for fame.

Stendhal and Disraeli shape the end of youth to the spirit of their times. Youth is the age of Contarini Fleming's ideal of being a great man, but his youth must end. The maturity which Wilhelm Meister achieves is not perceived as an acquisition by Contarini Fleming, but rather as a loss. The power of Contarini Fleming's memory never lets the past greatness really become

**"past", and he sees the experience of the present as a failure. He wishes to write while he can "recall the past with vivid accuracy, and record it with vividness", while his memory "is still faithful, and while the dewy freshness of youthful fancy still lingers" on his mind [CF p.4].**

**What vanishes is the notion of experience as put forward by Wilhelm Meister as formative encounters with reality, assimilation and reorganisation of his developing personality. For Wilhelm Meister his experiences are milestones in his path to maturity, for Fleming and Sorel they are detours, roles that no longer hold the meaning of their existence; they are not adults even at the end of the narratives. Their individual formation is not identified with their assimilation within the rules of society. Sorel is condemned to death and Fleming lives in solitude surrounded by works of art and music kept for himself, "a solace necessary to solitude", and his mentor, Winter "is my only friend and my only visitor" [CF p.363]. He has resolved to "create a paradise" where he intends to erect a Saracen palace filled with the finest works of modern and ancient art. He has laid the foundation of the tower destined to rise 150 feet which is to equal the celebrated works of antiquity in design (75). A grand scheme, but not the ambition to expect from a genuine poet. Certainly Contarini Fleming is a man endowed with an artistic temperament, but he is also a man wanting to leave a tangible memorial to himself, embodying his cultivated imagination in the marble tower.**

## VI

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of Disraeli's novel and Stendhal's Le rouge et le noir is the manner in which they end. In a "happy ending" the plot becomes an intentional progress and ceases to be a chronological succession. The achievement of happiness strengthens a novel's sense of closure; the story's ending and the hero's aim coincide, which is what took place in the classical "Bildungsroman". In Wilhelm Meister the amalgamation of time, happiness, meaning and closure emphasised the irreversible progression from the experiments of youth to a mature identity; individual formation is inseparable and directly coinciding with social integration. Hegel in the Phenomenology argued that the only purpose of time was to lead to the harmonious end of Truth and the whole:

The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute, it must be said that it is essentially a result, that only in the end is it what it truly is.... (76)

The meaning of the "Bildungsroman" then can only be reached by coming to belong to a system; the hero's individual self-determination is subsumed in the whole. If the hero is to enjoy absolute freedom in a specific area of his existence, he must comply with complete conformity in the other areas of social activity, for everyday life demands a stability in social relationships. The dilemma is the clash between individual autonomy and social integration. Goethe's solution is an escape from freedom. Wilhelm Meister is a free individual but a convinced citizen who perceives the social norms as his own. He

internalizes them and fuses external compulsion and internal impulses into a new unity until external and internal are indistinguishable. The desire of belonging is perceived by Meister as his own, and all other desires can be subordinated. At the end he exists for himself, because he has willingly agreed to be determined by external circumstances and is a paradigm of modern socialisation, wanting to do what he should have done. The work, then, ends in marriage where he is forced to be happy in spite of his intentions.

Marriage is not only the foundation of the family, but a contract between the individual and the world, and thus, is a metaphor for the social contract. One marries or leaves social life; Contarini Fleming marries, but a crisis is reached when his wife dies. This rupture leaves him an outsider, and the novel with a dis-closure and no sense of an ending. For Goethe, happiness is the opposite of freedom, the end of becoming. Marriage marks the end of tension between the individual and the world. Contarini Fleming then is not comparable with Wilhelm Meister on this issue. Disraeli's novel Venetia is a novel of marriage, whereas both Contarini Fleming and Le rouge et le noir are open-ended narratives.

George Eliot recognised that "conclusions are the weak point of most authors, but some of the fault lies in the very nature of a conclusion, which is at best a negation" (77). That is the dispersive logic of narrative. An effective closure always stands in a negative or discontinuous relation to narrative and Le rouge et le noir thrives on this discontinuity. Julien dies, narratively a more

effective consummation than Disraeli's ending, for his death can motivate the curtailment of narration, and ensure the minimal narrative coherence of biography. However, in Disraeli's Contarini Fleming the fact that Fleming does not die ensures that what is left over is demonstrably capable of producing further narrative. What better way for Disraeli of having and not having his closure, than the device of the "retour des personnages", where what is most importantly "returned" is not the characters in Contarini Fleming, but the possibility of more narrative. Closure for Disraeli co-exists with the possibility of going beyond it in a novel "series" to keep Disraeli's persona in the public's awareness.

Towards the end of his life in 1870, Disraeli returned to the apprenticeship theme in the novel Lothair. The eponymous hero has a recognisable Victorian sense of duty and is quite closely related to the characters of Wilhelm Meister. He discovers that "a sense of duty is natural to man,..., and that there can be no satisfaction in life without attempting to fulfil it". The hero, Lothair, is able to buy up a forlorn district of Westminster which might "effect the salvation of his country". He worries and asks himself "whether he could incur the responsibility of shrinking from the fulfilment of this great duty" (78). Disraeli fulfils Leslie Stephen's words in his review Mr Disraeli's Novels that "a novelist finds out the merits of middle age in his later work" (79).

While Contarini Fleming was inspired by Wilhelm Meister, it has more affinities with Stendhal's Le rouge et le noir. Development and formation as a

synthesis of experience and harmony, the homology of individual self-determination and socialisation is the essence of Wilhelm Meister. Disraeli and Stendhal have Napoleon as the hero of their youth; neither set out on life's journey to have experiences, but rather to embark on a type of personal quest. Youth, therefore, finds its meaning not in the creation of connections with the existing social order, but in breaking these connections. There seems to be no happiness in synthesis; Fleming lives in conflict and at the end lives in solitude. He states that "man's conduct is in his own power" [CF p.364], but despite his profession that "My interest in the happiness of my race...[and]...the political regeneration of the country to which I am devoted...." and in which, "great work I am resolved to participate" [CF p.363] the novel halts abruptly with the artist hero still an unintegrated outsider:

Here let me pass my life in the study and the creation of the beautiful. Such is my desire; but whether it will be my career is, I feel, doubtful [CF p.363]

Is it enough for Contarini Fleming to feel deeply and talk of the betterment of mankind? They are, rather, gestures and words that indicate an awareness of his own distinctiveness; he remains apart while talking of commitment.

Contarini Fleming never questions his inadequacy nor does the novel rest on the assumption that the world gives the individual the room and the time to grow as self-hood demands. Wilhelm Meister is allowed by Goethe to experiment; experiment implies the possibility of error, but the world will help him to find himself. The situation is reversed for Disraeli as Contarini Fleming sees himself only as an imaginative leader, someone who can show the rest of the

world how to live. Because the novel is strongly autobiographical, it is subject to intrusion from Disraeli who was too close to achieve an adequate perspective. His career was only just beginning when he wrote the novel in 1832, and he was unable to be sure that Contarini Fleming's initiation, in so many ways like his own, had been a complete success. This is perhaps why he chose to leave the future ambiguous. Unlike Stendhal's Julien Sorel, Disraeli did not evade the problem by bringing him to an untimely death, indeed this would have undermined his purpose in writing, but neither was he able to give Contarini Fleming an integrated conclusion like Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre.



## **CHAPTER 2**

**Coningsby as "Bildungsroman": the hero as exemplary  
representative of the English aristocracy.**

In the classical European "Bildungsroman" represented by Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre human "Bildung" is a fall from unity of being into division and conflict between the interior self and the exterior world, and is a necessary departure on the path to development in which error, and occasionally suffering, are justified as important to the self-formation and self-realisation of the mature individual. It demonstrates an amalgamation of time, meaning, happiness and closure which emphasises the irreversible movement from youthful experimentation to a mature identity. Wilhelm Meister's individual formation is portrayed as being inescapable from, and, in the ending, directly coinciding with, social integration.

Despite its many comparisons with Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre nothing of all this was left in Disraeli's overtly autobiographical novel Contarini Fleming which has more of an affinity with Stendhal's Le rouge et le noir. One aspect of the theme of the hero in the making of the English "Bildungsroman" is its relative modesty which can be compared with the ambition of Stendhal's Julien Sorel and Disraeli's Contarini Fleming. The phenomenon of Napoleon's early career which suggested an illimitable scope open to any young man wishing to carve out a place for himself in society was taken up by Stendhal, who described Julien Sorel's efforts to make his way from humble beginnings to wealth, influence and power. The youth of Contarini Fleming and Julien Sorel was not a teleological course which ended in a superior maturity; the inherent meaning of their lives could neither be shaped by the protagonists nor grant them happiness. Their

need for autonomy clashed directly with the dictates of socialisation, and conflict present in the text denied integration. Julien Sorel was isolated from society firstly in prison and then in death, while Contarini Fleming imprisoned himself within his mind, isolated from society in "paradise", a "large estate in the vicinity of Naples with a palace and beautiful gardens". (CF p.362). With the failure of the protagonists to make connections with the outside world the texts are deprived of meaning.

Everyone Contarini Fleming meets he wants to dominate, beginning with his persuasion of his fellow university students to become like Schiller's robbers and which he defends as sentimental heroics in an "age of reality". "In this age we are as prone to disbelieve in the extraordinary as we were once eager to credit it". (CF p.141). The speculation that the robber leader might be nothing better than a decayed innkeeper or "a broken subaltern at the best", is countered by Contarini Fleming himself that he is by no means "a common character".

By 1837, when Disraeli was elected Tory M.P. for Maidstone, he had written Venetia, an apology for Byron and Shelley renamed Plantagenet Cadurcis and Marmion Herbert. His defence is tempered by a recognition that the same imaginative energies that produce great poetry can also find expression in questionable conduct. Shelley in the guise of Marmion Herbert, a young radical poet and philosopher had "celebrated that fond world of his imagination, which he wished to teach men to love. In stanzas glittering with refined images, and

resonant with subtle symphony, he called into creation that society of immaculate purity and unbounded enjoyment which he believed was the natural inheritance of unshackled man". (V p.225). Herbert's disbelief in conventional morality, combined with revolutionary politics, atheism and idealism lead to his abandoning his wife, and daughter Venetia and his subsequent exile from England. In his later years Herbert finds that "Time had stilled his passions, and cooled the fervour of his soul. The age of his illusions had long passed". (V p.380) and he warns Cadurcis, his political as well as poetic disciple that it is "sympathy that makes you a poet. It is your desire that the airy children of your brain should be born anew within another's that makes you create; therefore, a misanthropical poet is a contradiction in terms". (V p.448). Written five years after the autobiographical Contarini Fleming, Venetia illustrates that the Byronic Cadurcis's career is a misuse of his imaginative energy, while Herbert's has been a waste of his idealistic imagination. Essentially Disraeli was coming to terms with the negative possibilities of the imagination and the will.

At the end of Venetia Disraeli drowns both Cadurcis and Herbert, despite the conversion from their wilful early lives, the Byronic egotism and Shellyan unorthodoxy. This perhaps was a gesture towards his poetic heroes, in that he did not want to see them succumbing to conventional lives. The manner of their deaths suggests they remain Romantic figures in death. Marmion Herbert died, not as a husband and father in a final separation from the world of those he had loved, but as a philosopher contemplating truth:

**"It would appear that he had made no struggle to save himself, for his hand was locked in his waistcoat, where, at the moment, he had thrust the Phaedo, showing that he had been reading to the last, and was meditating on immortality when he died. (V p.482) (1).**

**Cardurcis, expecting marriage to Venetia, and less philosophical, had attempted to save himself and swim for the shore. By drowning him Disraeli recognised the incompatibility of Romantic imagination and the everyday mundane virtues.**

**The marriage of Venetia and Cardurcis would not have been a convincing possibility. She marries instead the dull, upright, dependable, conventional naval officer, Captain George Cadurcis.**

**In Venetia Disraeli demonstrates the two conclusions of marriage. The first is the conventional marriage conclusion of Venetia and George Cadurcis which requires socialised and unexceptional partners. The drowning of Marmion Herbert and Plantagenet Cadurcis unites and reconciles the imagination of a Shelleyan figure to focus on the social problems of the age with the force of the Byronic will to effect significant social change. Disraeli extended his original "sympathy with the herd" of Vivian Grey (VG pp.19-20) to realise its social implications in Venetia; however he realises that correct sympathy is required:**

**"If we did not sympathise with the air, we should die. But, if we only sympathised with the air, we should be in the lowest order of brutes, baser than the sloth. Mount from the sloth to the poet (V p.448).**

**It is significant that Herbert was reading Plato when he drowned, rather than Aeschylus and Keats as Shelley was in Trelawny's account. Disraeli's message is that: "We are all under great obligations to Plato...Platonic love was a great invention". (V p.448). It is not enough to find one human being to love, but the**

search must be for a love corresponding to the Platonic "spiritual antitype of the soul". Love will rise to "an universal thirst for a communion...of our whole nature, intellectual, imaginative, and sensitive". (V p.449). The communion extends to all humanity, and this is how the poets become "the unacknowledged legislators of the world". (V p.459).

Disraeli used the unpublished Defence of Poetry in which Shelley had written that celebrated writers of the present day

...measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit, and they are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations; for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age. Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. (2)

The poet lays the foundation in the hearts and minds of people for the reception of new ideas and, ultimately, change. Shelley insisted on the moral value of poetry. Poetry was fundamentally a product of creative imagination and since a high state of civilization could be achieved only through insights into the moral problems which faced men, sympathy and love as the foundation of moral life, could only be awakened by the active imagination. Poetry for Shelley was the foundation for the good of civilization and imagination equated with reason: "A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth". (3).

Disraeli translated Romantic imagination and intensity into action and at the time of writing Venetia he was involving himself in the young England

movement. The first of Disraeli's most successful novels in terms of readership and notoriety was Coningsby; or The New Generation, the first part of what came to be known as the Young England Trilogy which displays a new seriousness of purpose. It demonstrates Disraeli's maturing understanding and reconciliation of aspects of Byron and Shelley's work, and moving beyond the narrow confines of the ambition and will of Contarini Fleming to a picture, out of Don Juan, of an aristocracy in decay. Disraeli's idea and ideal of a regenerate aristocracy was that it must be true to its highest standard, forward - looking, regenerating society on lines evolving from the heroic chivalric ideals of the past.

## I

Disraeli indicates his purpose in writing Coningsby, published in 1844, in the subtitle "the New Generation", who are the members of the youth of the old nation coming to terms with the challenge of the new. The action covers the period from the 1832 Reform Act when Coningsby is an Eton schoolboy of 14, and ends with the Tories return to power in 1841 when Coningsby enters Parliament at the age of 23. Disraeli's Preface to the 5th edition written in 1849 defends his purpose in writing Coningsby, which he saw, among other things, as vindicating "the just claims of the Tory party to be the popular political confederation of the country". (VG p.xvii). That Coningsby is usually referred to as the first "political" novel is largely as a result of Disraeli's preface dedicating the book to Henry Hope (4) writing that he had "endeavoured to picture something of that development of the new and, as I believe, better mind of England, that has often been the subject of our converse and speculation", and to "ascertain the true character of political parties". (C p.v.). The portrayal of individuals in politics under thin disguises was frequently attacked and, consequently, the criticisms were generally politically motivated. It was the reviews which it received which helped to foster the image of Coningsby as a purely "political" novel.

The reviewer of the Eclectic Review (5) gave a derogatory account of Disraeli's political and religious views and concludes:



Coningsby well demonstrates, that the policy of Sir Robert Peel, of his present supporters, and of his predecessors since the peace of Paris, is a fraud from beginning to end...The New Generation may excite intense curiosity, as it now seems to be doing; but Toryism, from whence it springs, is daily becoming more and more understood as the great antagonist of the liberties of mankind, the rights of conscience, and the welfare of the universal world. (6)

Thackeray wrote an anonymous review for the Whig Morning Chronicle and later went on to write a parody of Coningsby entitled Codlingsby in Punch (1847). In the review he calls Coningsby "a dandy-social, dandy-political, dandy-religious novel. Fancy a prostrate world kissing the feet of a reformer...in patent blacking; fancy a prophet delivering heavenly messages...with his hair in papers, and the reader will have our notion of the effect of the book...Politically, Coningsby is an exposure and attack of Whigs and Conservatives. Of Whigs much, but of Conservatives more. The author exposes the cant and folly of the name and the lies of the practice". (7). Disraeli was pleased with this review, as his letter of protest to The Times editor, John Delane about the poor notices of Coningsby in its pages makes clear. (8).

He wrote in this letter that "The notice in a hostile quarter, The Morning Chronicle, is conceived in a much higher spirit of appreciation", largely because Thackeray thought that Disraeli was "not only a dandy but a man of genius". (9). The New Monthly Magazine thought Coningsby "emphatically a novel of our own times...of our own day...of the great political cycle, beginning with the Reform Bill, and ending, as far as we can see at present, with Young England... Now there is no mistaking Coningsby. The life of its century is breathed into it". (10).

Disraeli noted with satisfaction in a letter to his sister, 21 August 1844, that Coningsby had been reviewed in France: "This day the Revue des Deux Mondes (the Q. Rev of Paris) contains a most elaborate and interesting art: on Conby..." (DL. iv, Letter 1368, p.138). It was reviewed under the title De la Jeune Angleterre by Eugène Forcade who argued that Disraeli had chosen to write a work with an immediate political objective rather than a work of great literary merit.

This perception of Coningsby continued, for in Morris Speare's early study of the development of the political novel in England and America he commences with the observation that: "The Political Novel was born in the prismatic mind of Benjamin Disraeli... Of the place of Disraeli in establishing a definite literary "genre" there can be no differences of opinion". (11). This raises the question of what is meant by the term "political literature" or what does it mean to call Coningsby the first political novel, which depends not so much on the definition of "novel" in "political novel", but the definition of "politics" and in this Morris Speare defines politics as party politics. Speare begins with the assumption that Disraeli was a political novelist because he had written in his preface that the novel's purpose was "to vindicate the just claims of the Tory party to be the popular political confederation of the country" as well as "The proof that Toryism was a fact, and that political institutions were the embodiment of popular necessities" (12) Lord Blake makes claims for Disraeli too by arguing that "In Coningsby he produced the first and most brilliant of English

political novels, a genre which he may be said to have invented, and in Sybil he produced one of the first and one of the most famous social novels..." (13).

It is quite clear that Coningsby deals with politics, makes political points and attempts to influence the reader to Disraeli's point of view. However as the development of the novel in England has been closely associated with varieties of realism, then much has been written about society and the way in which members of society stand in relationship to one another. Such writing is close to politics, and clearly no special form is required to treat politics in distinction from society. English radicals made use of the form of the novel in the closing decades of the eighteenth century to articulate their ideas; Thomas Holcroft's Anna St. Ives (1792) and The Adventures of Hugh Trevor (1794), Robert Bage's Hermesprong (1796) and William Godwin's Caleb Williams (1794) can all be seen as "political" novels. These and other English radical novelists championed individual man against a corrupt society. It can be argued that Caleb Williams was a by-product of Godwin's Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793). According to its preface, Godwin clearly intended the more accessible novel to demonstrate in fictional terms a world which made the moral and political reforms proposed in Political Justice necessary and, by implication, a world in which they were possible.

As the editor of Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century John Lucas in his introduction raises the rhetorical question "Where is Disraeli?", remarking that his omission might be explained on the grounds of lack of space;

more importantly he states the omission is because it seemed to him that Disraeli had not produced "important political literature" (14). While it might be argued that Coningsby is about the acquisition of power in order to achieve heroic ideals and lofty principles, it is not about the formation of cogent policies or administering states or governing countries. Coningsby certainly centres on the activities of contemporary politics, but why should Disraeli need to write a "political" novel given that he had already achieved fame as a novelist and greater fame as a political journalist and pamphleteer? Before his election to Parliament in 1837 he had been a political journalist and had published five political pamphlets: What is He? (1833), The Crisis Examined (1834), A Vindication of the English Constitution (1835), Peers and People (1835) and The Letters of Runnymede (1836). This period between the passing of the Reform Act in 1832 and the breaking of the Whig power in 1841, the years covered by the action of Coningsby had marked an important stage in Disraeli's political development. Through all these pamphlets the insistent tone is of uncompromising hostility to Whigs and Whiggism which becomes pronounced in The Crisis Examined (1834), the manifesto which announced his alliance with the Conservative Party.

Coningsby seems to have been written in order to draw attention to Disraeli himself, with the central figure, Sidonia, an inspiring and powerful man, a perfect piece of intellectual and practical mechanism. Sidonia/Disraeli is the ideal Jew as hero guiding the youth of the aristocracy towards a political awareness and understanding of their duties and responsibilities. Fraser's

Magazine reviewing Coningsby in July, 1844 astutely draws attention to this aspect of Disraeli's motive, and appears to be the only review which did: "Mr Disraeli...being a candidate for immortality, and, in his own eyes, no unsuccessful candidate neither, he has chosen as his "mark" the Greek letter, which has ever been regarded in the Roman Catholic Church as the most appropriate emblem of the Divinity" (15). Here the reviewer is referring to the dedication to Henry Hope on "May-Day" 1844 from Grosvenor Gate which Disraeli closed with the Delta signature. The triangle, argues the reviewer was the only emblem regarded by Young England as worthy of representing the mentor of the class (the youth of the aristocracy) through which Great Britain was to be regenerated. However, very recent papers are still arguing, as Richard G. Weeks does in the Journal of British Studies, that Coningsby is in fact a "personification" of Disraeli himself, although "supposed to be based on George Smythe, Disraeli's friend and fellow young Englander" (16). Rather than discussing Coningsby in the traditional way as part one of a trilogy presenting both a "political geography" and an historical survey of England, I want to argue that it is more useful to see Coningsby as a "Bildungsroman" and Coningsby himself the hero as an exemplary representative, in class terms, of the aristocracy, with Sidonia/Disraeli his guide.

In literature innovation is both a quantitative and qualitative change in generic mix. Within a narrative, various conventions combine in ways that can be seen as innovation or variation. It can be argued that innovation is not marked by the appearance of new forms, but by the altered functions of literary

conventions which embody such new conceptions, as for example the journey motif which became internalised in the Romantic period; the journey undertaken in Gulliver's Travels is different in kind from that of Novalis's Heinrich von Ofterdingen and the quest for the blue flower. Innovation as such is identified by critics who are contemporaneous, as we have seen with Disraeli's reviewers. It is not necessary to assume that writers are consciously aware of the conceptual nature of their innovation, and Disraeli was probably not fully aware of the change with which he was associated/credited. Perhaps it is more important not to look at Disraeli using new techniques to express his ideals, but as writing in an era which had already undergone a change in consciousness.

## II

It is difficult to account for the stability of English narrative conventions, but part of the reason for the relatively stable society could be that England remained largely untouched by Napoleon, and accounts of the 1789 Revolution were almost all second hand. Despite the problems of the Industrial Revolution and Chartism in England, there was a greater stability of institutions and of the principles of government, which permitted less variation in tastes and habits of the English public than in the rest of Europe.

The French Revolution and Napoleonic expansion instilled terror into propertied Europe. The English manufacturing middle classes, particularly in Manchester and the North rallied to the aristocracy (17). An era of war against the French abroad and repression against the working class at home culminated in forcing an extension of the franchise, the Reform Bill of 1832, which marked out the new ruling bloc, including itself but excluding the proletariat.

With the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 and the success of the Anti-Corn Law League, Cobden launched a campaign against primogeniture, the device for securing aristocratic control of the land, which was aimed directly at the basis of the power position of the aristocracy. The bourgeoisie refused to allow it, concerned as it was with integrating itself into the aristocracy, not collectively as a class, but like Disraeli, by individual ascent.

After 1832 the middle-class used its vote to elect MPs from the aristocracy, and not from its own ranks. The exact relationship between its predecessor and the landed elite was reproduced even after it had been given the power to do otherwise. Thus the middle class manufacturers delegated power to the aristocracy. The rigorous structure of the aristocracy radically destructured the middle class, as access was always open to the select few like Disraeli. (18)

The nation which gave birth to the Industrial Revolution checked the idealisation of material growth and pushed it into reverse through contrary ideals of stability, tranquillity and closeness to the past. The English discomfort with progress led to an encapsulation of an English way of life in rustic imagery, and the countryside of the mind was ancient, stable, spiritual and slow-moving - everything which industrial society was not.

Young England, of which Disraeli was the assumed leader, and who "acted together" in Parliament, sought to revive the principle of an ancient and imaginary Toryism. As a group they were partly social, partly political and partly a literary amalgam based on Clarendon's History of the Great Rebellion, Henry St. John Bolingbroke's Patriot King, Scott's novels and Kenelm Digby's The Broad Stone of Honour; or, Rules for the Gentlemen of England. The nineteenth century escape to an imaginary pre-industrial golden age of feudalism was used as a programme of resistance to Utilitarianism, and in the novels of Scott and Digby's Broad Stone of Honour this opposition was called chivalry. Kenelm Digby's praise of chivalry was "drawn up for the purpose of instructing



youth and of reminding maturity" of their duties and who "are united upon the common ground of the faith, loyalty, and honour" (19). This eulogy to medievalism exhorted the English aristocracy to be worthy of their position in society in "dignity and religion, virtue and accomplishment" and is a compendium of facts, legends and anecdotes. Digby's definition of chivalry is that it is "conversant with all that is beautiful and sublime in the intellectual world", claiming that it belongs to all generous and heroic minds throughout the ages. (20)

### III

Chivalry was of central importance to the overall concept of Young England. Disraeli largely inherited a concept of chivalry from Scott. Scott tried to define the romantic sensibility and its relation to the world of social and moral responsibility in his novel Waverley. As early as 1835 in The Vindication of the English Constitution, Disraeli had maintained that the English Constitution rests on the primary assumption that property entails duties. In the 1840's he held that it was this principle that persisted through change and gave continuity and direction to social progress. His location of its origin in the feudal system not only conformed with Young England's conception but harmonised with a wider cult of medievalism and chivalry in nineteenth century England. Scott saw in chivalry the possibility of reconciling freedom and order in an essay written for the Encyclopaedia Britannica (21) where he defined chivalry as the use of individual freedom to defend the social order, mediating between extreme individualism and the social organisation of a more developed civilization. The essay found chivalry not only "beautiful and praiseworthy" but criticised it for such defects as fanaticism and superstition, extravagance and the fact that "enterprises the most extravagant in conception, the most difficult in execution, the most useless when achieved, were those by which an adventurous knight chose to distinguish himself". He wrote of chivalry as a thing of the past surviving only in so far as the best elements "from the wild and overstrained courtesies of Chivalry has been derived our present system of manners". Scott therefore brought chivalry up to date, popularising a type of character which could be

called chivalrous. An important element in the appeal of the chivalrous knight was the protection he offered to those in need and his sense of responsibility to his dependents on whose loyalty he could consequently rely.

Disraeli was well acquainted with Scott's work and was first introduced to it by his father Isaac D'Israeli; Disraeli took a rather proprietorial interest in him and referred to him as "The Chevalier" (22). The influence of Scott's work on Disraeli can be seen in Coningsby, which is written in the tradition, not of romantic adventure, but of the "Bildungsroman". Scott's contribution to adapting the formerly romantic novel to the needs of modern society was in furthering an overall view of character and society, although it has been argued that he failed to cope with the problems of contemporary life, or to represent internal experience. (23). However Georg Lukács discusses the "world-historical individual" as the necessary hero of drama, contrasts this type of hero with the invented figures Scott uses as his heroes, and identifies the relative functional difference between the two types of character. (24).

While the great historical figures are mainly central to the dramatic plot, the novel can tolerate only brief appearances of these figures as secondary characters, because in aiming to give a total overall picture of the historical background, the great figure must appear in only a secondary way as they would appear in the lived experiences of everyday life. The task of the historical novel is to represent the significant features of the "world-historical individual", but it is necessary that the novel does not neglect the complex factors of development in

the whole society at the time. Thus the portrait of the age can be cemented at the centre by the "middle-of-the-road" hero:

Those very social and human characteristics which banish such figures from drama or permit them only a subordinate, episodic role, qualify them for their central position in this historical novel. The relative lack of contour to their personalities, the absence of passions which would cause them to take up major, decisive, one-sided positions, their contact with each of the contending hostile camps, etc., make them specially suited to express adequately, in their own destinies, the complex ramification of events in a novel. (25)

"A kind of dissolution of the human" (26) sets in during the industrial era, and the characters in novels become problematic; the portrayal of the personality of the hero as insipid in Scott's novels demands justification within the body of the work. Consequently the hero's temperament will be explained in terms of, for example, his family situation and relationship with his father, which can be seen too as symbolic of the character's relationship to the predominant values of existing society.

Waverley is an individual "Bildung" set against the consequences of the Jacobite rebellion, and how it affects Waverley's life as his fortunes become bound up with the losing side. The development of Waverley as a "Bildungsroman" begins as Waverley seeks a surrogate father as a source of values that are lacking in his life and which will act as a basis for his own identity. His substitute is the Baron of Bradwardine, a Lowland Scot of the old school, loyal, courageous and honourable to the point of eccentricity, while Coningsby's mentor is the omniscient Jew, Sidonia. Waverley and Coningsby both have similar problems at the outset. Coningsby begins his life bereft of a

**father, Waverley a mother and, for all intents and purposes abandoned by their mother and father respectively. Consequently they both lack the parental guidelines and sympathies which help form an integrated personality. Both are born into two worlds, one of which is in the past and dead, and the other impotent without the aid of youthful regeneration. Once they have learned enough and matured enough from confrontations and once they have empirically validated the best and worst of the Tory and Whig positions, they will have earned the right to symbolically restore the communal harmony.**

**Coningsby's exploits, however, are not really experiences, and will never shed a different light on the straight line of his already predetermined path to aristocratic and political greatness, and as such, his exploits might be called digressions rather than experiences. Coningsby has no strong individual character or sensibility. The passive unheroic Coningsby is a medium for Disraeli to introduce historical and political detail - a representative of the aristocracy at the scene of action. He is inactive because he shares the need of the aristocracy he represents to be educated. Without Coningsby the instructive or informative content of the novel would be dull. Sidonia guides Coningsby in many question and answer sessions: "I am speaking to elicit truth, not to maintain opinions", said Coningsby; "for I have none", he added mournfully'. (C p.251). Disraeli sacrifices Coningsby to make his points, and the virtue of a passive hero having no opinions is that he needs to be "educated" and that he is at Disraeli's mercy.**

In Hazlitt's essay Why the Heroes of Romances are Insipid he addresses the problem through the "Waverley" novels. Readers usually expect an interesting hero who adopts an approved stance and is usually in the right:

If there was any doubt of their success, or they were obliged to employ the ordinary and vulgar means to establish their superiority over every one else, they would no longer be those "faultless monsters" which it is understood they must be to fill their parts in drama". (27).

Heroes of old romance had active feats to perform but the hero of Waverley is inactive, and in this Disraeli follows Scott by having an inactive hero. Waverley and Coningsby "are acted upon, and keep in the background and in a neutral posture, till they are absolutely forced to come forward, and it is then with a very amiable reservation of modest scruple" (28). Rather than his own actions playing a part in his eventual success Coningsby is a "tabula rasa" to be acted upon by chance or circumstance. The theme of Coningsby is ostensibly the "New Generation", Coningsby's character is representative of the National Character. The inability to act, in spite of Coningsby's implied personal potential for great deeds and genius in his alleged leadership qualities at Eton, parallels that of the nation.

Coningsby's guide, mentor and father-figure Sidonia is asked by Coningsby what he understands by the term "national character". Sidonia replies:

"A character is an assemblage of qualities; the character of England should be an assemblage of great qualities".

"But we cannot deny that the English have great virtues".

**"The civilisation of a thousand years must produce great virtues; but we are speaking of the decline of public virtue, not its existence".**

**"In what, then, do you trace that decline?"**

**"In the fact that the various classes of this country are arrayed against each other".**

**(C p.251)**

**This view was an important aspect of Disraeli's thinking and one which he explored thoroughly in Sybil. The way in which Disraeli deals with this view can be seen as an extension of Scott's method in Waverley and in Ivanhoe: that it is not a narrowly political question but rather a recognition that the development and fate of a nation is as interesting as a single protagonists' fate. The basic decline is in the loss of tradition, particularly of the traditional leadership by the aristocracy, and a problem which exercised Young England. Coningsby is essentially only descriptive of politics and reflects the state the "national character" is in:**

**If the nation that elects the Parliament be corrupt, the elected body will resemble it. The nation that is corrupt deserves to fall. But this only shows that there is something to be considered beyond forms of government - national character. And herein mainly should we repose our hopes. If a nation be led to aim at the grand and the great, depend upon it, whatever be its form, the government will respond to its conviction and its sentiments. (C p.373).**

**It is quite clear that when Disraeli is writing here of "the nation" and "national character", he is actually writing about the aristocracy. The statement early in Coningsby that "There is no influence at the same time so powerful and so singular as that of individual character" refers to Sidonia, and it must be**

**understood that the real success of the "individual character" will be achieved if it reflects, guides and understands the "national character".**

**Disraeli here is addressing directly the problem of the failure of duty of the aristocracy. The aristocracy retained the maximum governing force, but where popular agitation and economic crisis seriously challenged the so-called "rights" of that force (29), supporters of the landed proprietors, and interpreters of ancient traditions such as Disraeli accepted that two things were essential to the old regime's preservation. Firstly the working classes should be made to retain as long as possible their respect for custom and tradition; secondly the aristocracy needed to be educated in order to recognise the powerful industrial and social forces in the country. In particular it was the frivolous youth who were possessed of no sense of their coming responsibilities and were ignorant of the nature of the forces of change who needed education: Sidonia tells Coningsby that: "Almost everything that is great has been done by youth". (C p.125).**



#### IV

Both Scott and Disraeli write about the individual within society. In his preface to his translation of Goethe's Götz von Berlichingen, Scott noted that the historical genre was the background for a tragic figure:

Amid the obvious mischiefs attending such a state of society, it must be allowed that it was frequently the means of calling into exercise the highest heroic virtues. Men daily exposed to danger, and living by the constant exercise of their courage acquired the virtues as well as the vices of a savage state;... (30).

All Scott's novels have characters who represent social trends and historical forces and which deal with societies in transition. Goethe's drama (1771) portrays the superiority of a chivalric society to a commercial one. Certain values of the human spirit had died with feudalism which is made manifest in Götz's last speech to Elizabeth his wife:

The times of Betrayal are coming, and to him free rein is given. The base will rule by cunning, and the noble man will fall into their snares. (31).

This anticipates Edmund Burke's lament, taken up later as we have seen by Kenelm Digby, for the spirit of chivalry: "But the age of chivalry is gone! That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever". (32)

Scott's emphasis in his preface on the state of society had the effect of qualifying the emphasis on the individual where chivalrousness and courage are personal characteristics of Götz. Rather he sees the values as a particular code of

conduct which prevails in a particular type of society. For Scott the individual has no meaning outside of society; it is either the relationship between the individual and society in the process of formation, or one already established. Society has ontological status lacking in the individual, generating values and customs which are the most significant structuring principle of the world of human action; one set of values is superseded by another, with remorseless enlargement, shrinking and enlargement of possible worlds for particular individuals and society as a whole is in motion.

In Coningsby there is inherited wealth and leisure which is central to the plot. Now Lukács argues that wealth is based on a kind of social presupposition which is not examined and because it is inherited is particularly relevant to the case of the landed gentry. The story is a framework of largely unexamined suppositions, the institutions end up as something merely given, as a result of the accidental origin of the work in a moment of historical development.

Lukács sees the starting point of a novel as always subjective while the objective, outside world does not engage with the idea of its reconciliation with man; consequently the world-oriented novel (Lukács novel of abstract idealism) proves to be based on an illusion in which the hero is characterised not only by a blind faith in the world's meaning, but also by an unjustified conviction that his quest will be successful and that reconciliation is possible. Disraeli gets over this problem by resorting to fairy tale formulae, and importing amusing eccentrics to provide an opposition to the sentimentalised aristocratic universe

where sentimentality is used precisely because Disraeli accepts it at face value. He brings into Coningsby a preconception as to the nature of that external reality which Lukács argues it was the business of the novel to explore without any preconceived notions.

Scott emphasises that it is not men who make history as they choose, (his is not an adherence to Hegel's world-historical individual), but that they act only within the context of historically determined conditions. Like Disraeli Scott was concerned with the consequences of living in a blinkered society. In the postscript to Waverley he wrote that "like those who drift down the stream of a deep and smooth river, we are not aware of the progress we have made, until we fix our eye on the now distant point from which we have been drifted." (W p.492). Scott did not believe in simple "progress"; the age of transition implied the catastrophe of the destruction of a complex of traditions, and a price is paid for the extension of commerce:

"The effects of the insurrection of 1745 - the destruction of the patriarchal power of the Highland chiefs - the abolition of the heritable jurisdictions of the Lowland nobility and barons - the total eradication of the Jacobite party, which, averse to intermingle with the English or adopt their customs, long continued to pride themselves upon maintaining ancient Scottish manners and customs - commenced this innovation. (W p.492)

When Coningsby was published Disraeli gave a speech in 1844 at the Manchester Athenaeum which clearly addressed the aristocracy on its responsibilities:

The Youth of a nation are the Masters of Posterity; but the youth I address have duties peculiar to the position which they occupy. They

are the rising generation of a society unprecedented in the history of the world; that is at once powerful and new. In other parts of the kingdom the remains of an ancient civilisation are prepared ever to guide, to cultivate, to inform, to influence the rising mind. But they are born in a miraculous creation of novel powers, and it is rather a providential instinct that has developed the necessary means of maintaining the order of your new civilisation than the natural foresight of man. This is their inheritance. They will be called upon to perform duties - great duties; I for one wish, for their sakes and for the sake of my country, that they may be performed greatly. I give to them that counsel that I have ever given to youth, and which I believe to be the wisest and the best - I tell them to aspire. (33)

This is Disraeli in the guise of Sidonia counselling Coningsby. It was typical of the middle classes of England that Disraeli had an ambition to distinguish himself from others and to be part of an aristocratic society. In placing Sidonia the Jew as the natural aristocrat of talent who was to guide the aristocratic youth in regenerating the nation, Disraeli understood what was required to meet the demands of the aristocracy. The attempts of the rich middle- classes to attain social status failed to convince the arrogant aristocracy because they lacked the most important element, the pride and privilege without individual effort and merit, simply by virtue of birth. Early in the century one of Disraeli's shrewder biographers, E.T. Raymond (34) stated that when Disraeli summoned up a pride of race to confront a pride of caste he understood that Jewish social status at least depended solely on the fact of birth and not of achievement.

In outline Lionel Nathan Rothschild (head of the English Banking House from 1836) was the original of Sidonia, but the early fortunes of Sidonia's family in Spain, migration to Italy and their coming to England paralleled that of

**Disraeli's family. Disraeli however meant to see himself in the character of Sidonia, outlining his own circumstances and his own views:**

**He brought to the study of this vast aggregate of knowledge a penetrative intellect that, matured by long meditation, and assisted by the absolute freedom from prejudice, which was the compensating possession of a man without a country, permitted Sidonia to fathom, as it were by intuition, the depth of questions apparently the most difficult and profound. (C p.228) (35).**

**Sidonia is the ideal Jew representing the Jewish character at its best with its intellectual powers, determination and idealism. He is detached, unprejudiced with a charming personality. In sum a figure of the ideal with power to influence the minds of others who need to be made aware of their duties. He inspires the representative Coningsby with ambition and confidence.**

Sidonia is the magnetic Byronic figure met in Venetia, but he now has the humanitarian imagination of Shelley. In A Defence of Poetry Shelley argued that the great secret of morals is love, or a going out of our own nature and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own:

A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. (36)

Poetry was the product of the creative imagination. Shelley lifted imagination to the level of reason, and Sidonia is seen by Disraeli very much in the light in which Shelley regarded the poet; a great man, like a great book produces "a magnetic influence blending with our sympathising intelligence, that directs and inspires it" (C p.129).

Isaac D'Israeli, Disraeli's father thought that men of genius occupied an important position in society, standing between the governors and the governed and that true genius was the organ of the nation. The influence of great men of genius on the nation was immeasurable, though not necessarily immediate. Disraeli appropriated his father's thought that as their ideas became familiar they sparked off new ideas in later geniuses. They created the "public mind" or conveyed it to politicians, for new ideas were needed by both the governed and the governors, and these ideas came only from the solitude of

contemplative men. Thus men of genius were romantic figures and the source of their powers was mysterious. They were solitary figures and their work was not immediately appreciated, yet they were, after all, the "unacknowledged legislators of the world". (37).

The creative instinct is essential to leaders: "it was not Reason that created the French Revolution. Man is only great when he acts from the passions; never irresistible but when he appeals to the imagination. Even Mormon counts more votaries than Bentham...Man is made to adore and obey". (C p.253). Disraeli's *Sidon* is an example of Weber's charismatic type of authority (38). Apart from its use by both Hegel and Carlyle charisma was used by Weber to characterise self-appointed leaders who are followed by those in need of a leader and who believe him to be extraordinarily qualified. Not only military and political heroes but prophets and founders of world religions are the archetypes of the charismatic leader, and Weber thus views charismatic heroes as truly revolutionary forces in history.

A genuinely charismatic situation is direct and inter-personal. In contrasting the everyday life of institutions with the spontaneous and personalised nature of charismatic leadership, Weber's conception of the charismatic leader is in continuity with the concept of "genius" as it was applied to intellectual and artistic leaders since the Renaissance.

Sidonia tells Coningsby that in order to avoid revolution and destruction in times such as these great men are required: "The Spirit of the Age is the very thing that a great man changes". (C p.124) and to advocate faith in heroic values in place of materialism and to protect the poor who cannot protect themselves:

From the throne to the hovel all call for a guide. You give monarchs constitutions to teach them sovereignty, and nations Sunday-schools to inspire them with faith (C pp.124-125).

The need for strong leadership in this "mechanical age" is the central, motivating force of Carlyle's Heroes and Hero-Worship:

...I liken common languid Times, with their unbelief, distress, perplexity, with their languid doubting characters and embarrassed circumstances, impotently crumbling-down into every worse distress towards final ruin; - all this I liken to dry dead fuel, waiting for the lightning out of Heaven that shall kindle it. The great man...is the lightning. His word is the wise healing word which all can believe in...In all epochs of the world's history, we shall find the Great Man to have been the indispensable saviour of his epoch. (39)

The need for a leader underpins the inspiration to be a hero as well as the need to find one; Coningsby sees that in Sidonia he has found his hero, ("You seem to me a hero" (C p.127)). Coningsby is forced to reject the "frigid theories of a generalising age that have destroyed the individuality of man" (C p.503).

Disraeli's argument was that not only did democratic theory reduce politicians to mere instruments of the people's will, but that a scientific conception of history as the play of cultural forces under the impersonal control of history left the individual leader far from being a superior being and dynamic creator, but a product of contemporary conditions. Carlyle's political hero was, in theory, gifted not only with courage and force, and was noble and just, but had superior



intelligence and could see "the wisest, fittest" action. If he did not possess these talents, and if his real concern was with personal glory and power he was no hero at all, but a "sham" hero. (40).

Coleridge, as well as Carlyle, attacked Hume for submitting the hero and the heroic to the cold light of reason (41). Coleridge contrasted the godlike creative and self-sufficing power of absolute genius with the man of "commanding genius", who, although creative and original failed to measure up as an absolute genius, but in terms of disinterestedness in the Hegelian sense, personal ambition was identical with ambition for the state, and therefore admirable.

Disraeli asserts that a means of acquiring political awareness and understanding is by coming into contact with those who already possess it:

What is this magic? It is the spirit of the supreme author, by a magnetic influence blending with our sympathising intelligence, that directs and inspires it. By that mysterious sensibility we extend to questions which he has not treated, the same intellectual force which has exercised over those which he has expounded. His genius for a time remains in us, 'Tis the same with human beings as with books. All of us encounter, at least once in our life, some individual who utters words that make us think for ever...a great man is one who affects the mind of his generation. (C pp.129-130).

Words from a man who "utters" great "truths" cause facts to fall into place, and as if, through "magic" problems are solved. Words such as "magic", "mysterious sensibility" and "magnetic influence" show that Disraeli elevated imagination to the same plane as "reason". (42) But to understand man it is not enough to observe, but to bring something from within. A sensitive self-

awareness is the prerequisite for the understanding of man and society. Sidonia is the example of the creative mind to whom experience is "less than nothing":

But everybody says that experience - Is the best thing in the world, a treasure for you, for me, for millions. But for a creative mind, less than nothing" (C p.125).

A knowledge of the subject must precede and interpret a knowledge of the object, which is what Disraeli means when writing of imagination and creative insight: Sidonia, for example, turned all branches of knowledge into intuition, and "the young Sidonia penetrated the highest mysteries of mathematics with a facility almost instinctive". (C p.226)

Disraeli was moving towards the spirit of Scott's work with the production of Coningsby, which was to qualify the role of the individual in history. Scott did not deny the role of the individual, but exhibited the objective and limiting historical circumstances in which this action is situated. Looking back at Venetia and the role of the Byronic hero, and the five novels which preceded it, there is a gradual development from avowed autobiographical portrait, beginning with Vivian Grey as an idealised portrait of a political adventurer through the similar portrait of a poetic Contarini Fleming.

The emphasis in Waverley is the maturing of Edward Waverley's political understanding, for he is the mouthpiece of Scott's view of the condition of Britain (43). Disraeli stresses the aspect of Harry Coningsby's personality which is political awareness, but Coningsby's political principles are never developed. Scott's view is free from the concept of history as a continuum of

cause and effect. It is through the simultaneous existence of ideologies, as the systems of ideas which direct political and social action, and "Weltanschauung" as the philosophy affecting the practical (as opposed to the theoretical) attitude and beliefs of its adherents that the conflicts in history are generated, and not by the fact that historically important individuals pursue different ends. Ideas and social forces are linked, and relativism becomes the motor of history. The figures of the anachronistic heroes Sidonia and Baron Bradwardine in Waverley are devices through which the "mechanical age" of commercial, industrial and politically centralised culture can be relativised and called into question. Disraeli advocated a mystic combination of Church, Monarchy and People, but he remained unclear about how this was to be achieved in social terms (44).

## VI

Coningsby evolves as a "Bildungsroman" of the aristocracy with the hero as representative being educated into political awareness by contact with a great and imaginative man, for Sidonia is the archetypal "Bildungsroman" guide:

It was because he had not found guides among his elders that his thoughts had been turned to the generation that he himself represented. The sentiment of veneration was so developed in his nature, that he was exactly the youth that would have hung with enthusiastic humility on the accents of some sage of old in the groves of Academus, or the porch of Zeno. (C p.131)

It can also be seen as an example of the English "Bildungsroman", an English fairy story because Coningsby's future is already predetermined. Although there is little evidence offered, Disraeli tells the reader that Coningsby has "natural leadership" qualities from his schooldays. In the English "Bildungsroman" the hero's childhood is given lasting prominence, and is one of the ways in which it differs from the paradigmatic Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre where Wilhelm Meister does not remain faithful to his first youthful impressions, but is able to break them. Disraeli's Coningsby follows the pattern of the English novel in that the most significant experiences are ones which confirm and preserve potential. Coningsby, as the representative of the aristocracy, is already marked out as a leader, so that his actual experiences count for little and are only digressions. His natural' leadership then begins at Eton: "The influence of the individual is nowhere so sensible as at school...A gracious presence, noble sentiments, or a happy talent..." (C p.45) although, apart from saving a friend from drowning there is little other evidence offered.

Coningsby is in some degree in the realms of fantasy and fairy tale. Certainly Coningsby's first meeting with the great and powerful Sidonia is thoroughly melodramatic. They meet after a walk through the forest which is interrupted by a thunderstorm. The forest oaks "roared, the beech shrieked", and straight out of a Tieck fairy tale "the passion of the ash was heard in moans of thrilling anguish". (C p.119). The "brooding wild fowl rose from the bosom of the lake, soared in the air, and, uttering mournful shrieks, whirled in agitated tumult. The deer started from their knolls..." (C p.119). Under an "ebony black" sky, having taken refuge in a "forest-inn", Coningsby stands at the window when the god-like Sidonia arrives abruptly: "a flash of lightning illumined the whole country, and a horseman at full speed, followed by his groom, galloped up to the door" (C p.120). Those scenes invite suspension of disbelief for the sake of fairy story with the result that Disraeli does not separate portraying the world as it is and suggesting to his readers how they ought to behave in it. He shifts between the normative and descriptive, shifting from possible worlds to describing the world as it is:

"Henry thinks", said Lord Everingham, "that the people are to be fed by dancing round a May-pole".

"But will the people be more fed because they do not dance round a May pole?" urged Lord Henry.

"Obsolete customs!" said Lord Everingham.

"And why should dancing round a May-pole be more obsolete than holding a Chapter of the Garter?" asked Lord Henry...

"....But the best thing we can do for the labouring classes is to provide them with work..."

"How do you find them about you, Mr Lyle?" continued the Duke.

**"I have revived the monastic customs at St. Geneviève," said the young man, blushing. "There is an almsgiving twice a week".**

**"I am sure I wish I could see the labouring classes happy", said the Duke. (C pp.142-143).**

**Bruno Bettelheim in The Uses of Enchantment (45) writes that "The fairy tale begins with the hero at the mercy of those who think little of him and his abilities...", and this is the basic predicament of many English "Bildungsroman" protagonists. In Coningsby Coningsby is part of a family "famous for its hatreds". (C p.8). His father, having married against Coningsby's grandfather, Lord Monmouth's wishes dies in exile and his mother renounces Coningsby and dies shortly afterwards. Lord Monmouth and his entourage are corrupt and evil, and Monmouth himself embodies the old self-interested Toryism. Monmouth's:**

**...sagacious intelligence was never for a moment the dupe of vanity. He had no self-love, and as he valued no one, there were really no feelings to play upon. He saw through everybody and everything; and when he had detected their purpose, discovered their weakness or their vileness, he calculated whether they could contribute to his pleasure or his convenience in a degree that counterbalanced the objection which might be urged against their intentions, or their less pleasing and profitable qualities. (C p.283)**

**Monmouth is an entirely self-seeking and manipulative man and at the climax of the novel Coningsby refuses to stand for the traditional family seat because that would entail him being the rival of his friend Oswald Millbank, "on the hustings of Darlford! Vanquished or victorious, equally a catastrophe". (C p.428).**

**Monmouth however disagrees with Coningsby's principles because he can see "no means by which I can attain my object but by supporting Peel. After all, what is**

the end of all parties and all politics? To gain your object. I want to turn our coronet into a ducal one..." (C p.432). Here Coningsby is learning to oppose his Grandfather, but at the outset Disraeli establishes a rather bland "good" personality for him. Bruno Bettelheim's thesis is that:

The figures in fairy tales are not ambivalent, not good and bad at the same time, as we all are in reality. But since polarization dominates the child's mind, it also dominates fairy tales. A person is either good or bad, nothing in between. The juxtaposition of opposite characters is not for the purpose of stressing right behaviour, as would be true for cautionary tales. Presenting the polarities of character permits the child to comprehend easily the difference between the two, which he could not do as readily were the figures drawn more true to life... a child's choices are based, not so much on right versus wrong, as on who arouses his sympathy and who his antipathy. The more simple and straightforward a good character, the easier it is for a child to identify with it and to reject the bad other. (46).

The separation of good and evil characters is undoubtedly an essential requirement of a story that entails the dissipation of ambiguity; here the separation of the new generation aristocracy, Young England epitomised by Coningsby and his defeat at the polls by the negative and evil epitome of the old order, Rigby. Rigby magnetically attracts the negative values of Disraeli's narrative which makes inevitable the polarization between the "good" Coningsby and his values and the self-interested old order. Thus Disraeli uses the polarization of good and evil in a fairy tale way and the standard of morality is part of each action and each page. The world then, therefore has meaning if it is divided into good and evil.

The structure of both Coningsby and Waverley prescribes the heroes' vocation in this opposition between good and evil. As both are "good" characters

they need only follow their guides; the moral universe already exists, they need not establish one, so there is little requirement for real action for it is eternal and unchangeable. The function of the hero is to render the world recognisable. Coningsby is not a "superhuman hero", but rather forever prey to chance and not in control of his destiny, it having been already prescribed for him. Despite Disraeli's occasional lapses into ideas of "genius" and power for Coningsby, he is a normal fairy tale hero, unable to control his own destiny through employment of those powers:

Coningsby did not sleep a wink that night, and yet when he rose early felt fresh enough for any exploit however difficult or dangerous. He felt as an Egyptian does when the Nile rises after its elevation had been despaired of. At the very lowest ebb of his fortunes, an event occurred which seemed to restore all. He dared not contemplate the ultimate result of all these wonderful changes. Enough for him, that when all seemed dark, he was about to be returned to Parliament by the father of Edith, and his vanquished rival who was to bite the dust before him was the author of all his misfortunes. Love, Vengeance, Justice, the glorious pride of having acted rightly, the triumphant sense of complete and absolute success, here were chaotic materials from which order was at length evolved; and all subsided in an overwhelming feeling of gratitude to that Providence that had so signally protected him. (C pp.495-6).

Providence protects Coningsby, and it is only chance that an unexpected series of events makes him a wealthy M.P. and brings the novel to an ending. In a fairy-tale way chance and accident are shown to be the ruling force of Coningsby.

Scott showed social and political forces at work on the individual - how men are determined and affected by forces beyond their control, although character in Scott's view is not deterministic. Scott presented history



as the effectiveness of heroism and the impossibility of human freedom.

Waverley is an account of its hero's education and its effect on his character displaying in what way it produced a habit of imaginative self-indulgence which prohibited rational self-control. Waverley's distracted mind and weakened judgment lacks a guiding mentor which leads to Scott's characterisation of him as "ignorant, since he knew little of what adds dignity to man, and qualifies him to support and adorn an elevated situation in society." (W p.49).

Waverley has an unstable character and in the Pretender's army at the battle of Prestonpans he encounters the first experience which shocks him out of his passivity. The death of Houghton (son of his Uncle's tenant) leads him to realise his failure to maintain responsibility as social and military leader as Houghton's "expostulation" of "Ah, squire, why did you leave us?" rang like a death knell in his ears". (W p.330).

Waverley realises his failure of duty:

I brought you from your paternal fields, and the protection of a generous and kind landlord, and when I had subjected you to all the rigour of military discipline I shunned to bear my own share of the burden, and wandered from the duties I had undertaken, leaving alike those whom it was my business to protect, and my own reputation, to suffer under the artifices of villainy. (W p.330).

Waverley becomes aware that his lack of self-knowledge has led to his isolation, and after leaving the Jacobite army he understands his recent past and sees that not only has he acquired "a more complete mastery of a spirit tamed by adversity

than his former experience had given him," but that "the romance of his life was ended, and that its real history had now commenced" (W p.415).

Scott concluded that the "heroes" of his novels were "very amiable and very insipid sort of young men". They were not actors, in the same way that Coningsby was not an actor. Rather both Waverley and Coningsby are acted upon by circumstances, when for example Coningsby can enter politics only through his Grandfather's death. In his anonymous review of himself in the Quarterly Review (1817), Scott made the observation that "every hero in poetry, in fictitious narrative ought to come forth and do or say something or other which no other person could have done or said". (47).

Scott's "insipid" young men, such as Waverley as well as Disraeli's Coningsby, more acted upon than acting, recall Friedrich's Schiller's On the Aesthetic Education of Man:

However much the world as a whole may benefit through the fragmentary specialisation of human powers, it cannot be denied that the individuals affected by it suffer under the curse of this cosmic purpose...In the same way the exertion of individual functions of the mind can indeed produce extraordinary human beings; but only the equal tempering of them all, happy and complete human beings. (48).

This is one of the keys for understanding the universe of values of the classical "Bildungsroman", a genre which does not deal in "extraordinary men", or "universal aims". It's prime function is to create "happy and complete human beings". Wilhelm Meister as paradigmatic hero of the classical "Bildungsroman"

**is not, in the words of Scott "acted upon by the spur of circumstances", but  
would take the opportunity to shape his own identity.**

## VII

Waverley and Coningsby would see taking any opportunity to mould their identity as a betrayal of their true selves. Consequently Disraeli and Scott balance their uninspiring and "insipid" heroes with odd and unmistakeable characters. Before drawing any conclusions it is as well to consider how, and more importantly why, Disraeli was concerned with this. Disraeli's aim is to make the world acquainted, in a fairy-tale way, with the opinions of the New Generation of aristocrats, while at the same time attempting to expose the archvillain of the story, utilitarianism, the current spirit of the times, and the political vices of the party by whom England's affairs, except for brief intervals, have been managed for the last fifty years.

Disraeli also attempts to make the aristocracy's guide, Sidonia, superior and larger than life. In order to lift him above the common run of man he adopts the peculiarly English device of offsetting him with peculiar and unmistakably ridiculous characters with ridiculous names who embody the opposite principal of aristocratic responsibility - characters such as Earwig, Magog Wrath, Lord Fitz-Booby as well as Tadpole and Taper. Tadpole "did not pretend to know anything", but his one idea was to gain the "Wesleyan" vote, while Taper's political reading was "confined to intimate acquaintance with the Red Book and Beatson's Political Index, which he could repeat backwards". (C p.91) (49).

**The malicious caricature of John Wilson Croker as Rigby, the parasitic man of business of Coningsby's grandfather, Lord Monmouth, is revenge for Croker's attacks on Young England:**

**Mr Rigby was member for one of Lord Monmouth's boroughs. He was the manager of Lord Monmouth's parliamentary influence, and the auditor of the vast estates... Rigby was not a professional man; indeed, his origin, education, early pursuits, and studies, were equally obscure, but he had continued in good time to squeeze himself into Parliament, by means which no one could ever comprehend...[and]...though destitute of all imagination and noble sentiment, was blessed with a vigorous, mendacious fancy, fruitful in small expedients, and never happier than when devising shifts for great men's scrapes. (C p.10).**

**Croker accused Young England of trying to create distrust of the only statesman, Peel, in whom the Conservatives had any confidence or hope. He wrote to Graham the Home Secretary who replied at the end of August:**

**With respect to Young England, the puppets are moved by D'Israeli, who is the ablest man among them: I consider him unprincipled and disappointed; and in despair he has tried the effect of bullying...D'Israeli alone is mischievous. (50).**

**These names are only "characters", not functional members of society, which relegates them to a feudal hierarchy of orders and ranks. Perry Anderson in his recent Origins of the Present Crisis argued that these "characters" are "the projective image of society naturally held and propagated by a landowning class...expression and instrument of the hegemony of an (ancestrally agrarian) aristocracy". Burke writing a year after the French Revolution had already pursued this intellectual framework in his attack on the revolutionaries for attempting to "confound all sorts of citizens, as well as they could into one**

**homogeneous man". It was the "wisdom" of the legislators "who framed the ancient republics" which should be praised for consolidating their "peculiar habits" in a "second nature". (51)**

**Thus Disraeli ensures the rigidity of "traditional - feudal" thought - a necessary concept for his notion of the aristocracy's responsibility to the "peasantry" transfixed in an inflexible social and personal second nature. The ridiculous characters are symptomatic of social inequality, and serves to maintain the principles of status within society.**

**The very fact of having Sidonia as the guiding force leaves the hero Coningsby, representative of his class, as a "normal" passive hero. The world in which Coningsby operates is, according to Disraeli full of abuses, but he does not seek to expose them, but to point out anything which departs from and subverts them. He draws comic portraits of the Tory party headquarters in London, bustling with political activity and Rigby's gossip with Tadpole and Taper about the rumoured resignation of Lord Grey, or Tadpole, Taper and Rigby out on a shoot with the Duke:**

**"Pray what is the country?" inquired Mr Rigby.**

**"The country is nothing; it is the constituency you have to deal with".**

**"And to manage them you must have a good cry", said Taper. "All now depends upon a good cry".**

**"So much for the science of politics", said the Duke, bringing down a pheasant. "How Peel would have enjoyed this cover".**

**"He will have plenty of time for sport during his life", said Mr Rigby.  
(C p.95)**

Disraeli has the ordinary hero and the Catholic Eustace Lyle both representing the "New Generation" discuss the hopeless future with either a Whig or old Tory government. Lyle's father is a Whig:

"I gathered at an early age", continued Lyle, "that I was expected to inherit my father's political connections with the family estates. Under ordinary circumstances this would probably have occurred... I cannot unite myself with the party of destruction... What, then, offers itself? The Duke talks to me of Conservative principles; but he does not inform me what they are... This party treats institutions as we do our pheasants, they preserve only to destroy them... It seems to me a barren thing, this Conservatism, an unhappy cross-breed; the mule of politics that engenders nothing". (C p.155).

But this is not the murmurings of political revolution, but for Disraeli, common sense, making a case for adjustment to old traditional values expressed by Burke in Reflections on the Revolution in France as "we compensate, we reconcile, we balance" (52) but which does not exclude reform. This is not a revolution inspired by reason and ideological appraisal. The "normality" of Coningsby is the most important aspect of Disraeli's narrative. As exemplary paradigm for the aristocracy, it is a wholly empirical adjustment, for normality does not challenge the existing social order in the name of abstract principles - it is neither demanding nor contentious, but a plea for return to duty.

Coningsby displays the highest virtue of the hero of the English

"Bildungsroman" which is "sincerity", which Lionel Trilling explains:

If we undertake to explain in Hegelian terms the English trait (sincerity)...., we must ascribe it to the archaic intractability of the English social organisation: the English sincerity depends upon the English class structure. And plainly this was the implicit belief of the English novelists of the nineteenth century. They would all of them appear to be in agreement that the person who accepts his class

situation, whatever it may be, as a given and necessary condition of his life will be sincere beyond question". (53)

**Disraeli casts Nicholas Rigby in the role of fairy tale villain:**

**The political grapes were sour for Mr Rigby; a prophet of evil, he preached only mortification and repentance and despair to his late colleagues. It was the only satisfaction left Mr Rigby, except assuring the Duke that the finest pictures in his gallery were copies, and recommending him to pull down Beaumanoir, and rebuild it on a design with which Mr Rigby would furnish him. (C p.89).**

**He opposes Coningsby's sincerity, and the villain, exemplifies social mobility in a world that does not acknowledge the right of citizenship to a villain. Rigby tries to usurp a place in the aristocracy of wealth and talent where he has no right to be, having neither talent nor inheritance. In Hegel's Phenomenology those who seek a change of status in the rigidly classified universe are seen as monsters or villains:**

**The consciousness which finds them of like nature to itself is noble. It sees in public authority what is in accord with itself...in the service of that authority its attitude towards it is one of actual obedience and respect...**

**The consciousness which adopts the other relation is, on the contrary, ignoble...hates the ruler, obeys only with a secret malice, and is always on the point of revolt. (54)**

**Coningsby becomes the victim of Rigby after his Grandfather's death. Coningsby is aware of "the latent malice" in Rigby, who seems destined to come into "a considerable slice" of Lord Monmouth's fortunes", and his disinheritance is secured by Rigby's "well-timed and malignant misrepresentations of what had occurred in Lancashire during the preceding summer". (C p.473).**



Because of Rigby's intervention and Coningsby's consequent disinheritance, Coningsby is then sentenced to the most common narrative metaphor for youth, "the journey". But unlike Contarini Fleming, Wilhelm Meister or Julien Sorel who are all happy to leave their childhood homes, Coningsby along with other such "heroes" of the English "Bildungsroman" as Waverley, has not deserved his fate. Coningsby's "journey" cannot, therefore, be seen as an ideal opportunity to try out new identities and, despite Sidonia's encouragement, to try for the Bar; Coningsby's journey, therefore, is a long and bewildering detour. Waverley wanted to awake from what seemed at the moment a dream, "strange, horrible and unnatural", while Coningsby passes "an agitated night of broken sleep, waking often with a consciousness of having experienced some great misfortune... he woke exhausted and dispirited". (C p.479). But having been in contact with the guiding force of Sidonia, a conviction of power in the midst of despair strengthens his resolve, and it was "indeed the test of a creative spirit". Coningsby feels that "he must be prepared for great sacrifices, for infinite suffering; that there must devolve on him a bitter inheritance of obscurity, struggle, envy, and hatred, vulgar prejudice, base criticism, petty hostilities, but the dawn would break,..." (C pp.480-481).

In the final analysis it is wealth which counts, but making money is vulgar; an aristocratic young man must have wealth, or at least acquire it passively. Oswald Millbank's father, the industrialist finds that "a Coningsby working for his bread was a novel incident for him". (C p.497). The inheritance pattern, a typical form of the English "Bildungsroman" ending, is

virtually non-existent in European narrative. Disraeli thus gives Coningsby a typically aristocratic feature, the idea that wealth and responsibility is something to be passed on from generation to generation. Waverley and Coningsby both have inheritances to which they have rights; in Waverley's case a vast rural estate, Waverley-Honour, in Coningsby's wealth and estate, and this is their very identity, an identity as people endowed with rights.

The romantic structure of familial "rights" of inheritance which Disraeli uses upholds and reinforces his thesis of the naturally inherited right and duty of the aristocracy to rule (55). Social inequality was the basis of English society and inequality was part of the national character. In jettisoning the rights of man in favour of the rights of Englishmen, it signifies the acceptance of the feudal concept of inheritance as the total of privileges inherited, together with title and land for the privileged classes. Disraeli advocated not revolution, but a return to origins and traditions, or a complete revolution where events have returned "full circle" to origins, an idea which was wholly in accord with "the old society principle of the legitimate influence of the higher ranks upon the lower orders as the best answer to disaffection and insubordination". (56).

## VIII

The restoration of Coningsby's inheritance is an act of justice. But it is the justice of fairy tale in which the wicked villain Rigby cheated Coningsby, where there has been an absent father, a dead mother and a clash with a cold and unfeeling grandfather.

Waverley's uncle, Everard Waverley, sets things to rights in Scott's novel, and in the same way Coningsby's surrogate "uncle" Millbank starts the wheels in motion which brings about the changes in Coningsby's fortunes abetted by the omniscient Sidonia who "had acquired a thorough knowledge of the circumstances which had occasioned and attended the disinheritance of Coningsby". (C. p.496). It is a structure of the romance: "Never making a single admission to all the representations of his son, Mr Millbank in a moment did all that his son could have dared to desire". (C p.497). Not long after his marriage to Edith Millbank Coningsby finally receives the rightful inheritance which had been bequeathed by Monmouth, not to the male line represented by Coningsby, but to his natural daughter Flora who has since died pining for love of Coningsby. This is in the tradition of the English "Bildungsroman", but owes something to the Arabian Nights and Voltaire's Zadig; Coningsby is a fantasy of wish fulfilment as well as observation on the political scene.

Disraeli writes: "What a sudden and marvellous change in all their destinies. Life was a pantomime; the wand was waved, and it seemed that the

school-fellows had of a sudden become elements of power, springs of the great machine." (C p.498). A political career for Coningsby is presented as a romantic crusade, a chivalric adventure in which the Whig dragons are slain and Oswald Millbank and Harry Coningsby become MPs who "refuse to bow before shadows and worship phrases; sensible of the greatness of their position, [they] recognise the greatness of their duties". (C p.503). But an important aspect distinguished Disraeli from many other advocates of chivalric values and medievalism which was the extension of the principles underlying the feudal system beyond its usual rural context. The point was not the situation or the function of the property but what its ownership entailed:

The merchant or manufacturer may deposit within it his accumulated capital, and may enjoy the privileges to which its possession entitles him, on condition that he discharges those duties which its possession also imposes. (57).

The revival of custom and tradition was not the complete answer to the "condition of England", but Disraeli had made it quite clear in his General Preface that although "the feudal system may have worn out", nevertheless "its main principle, that the tenure of property should be the fulfilment of duty, is the essence of good government". (58). Implicit in Sidonia's comment that "The Age of Ruins is past. Have you seen Manchester?" (C p.101) (59) is that the future belongs to the manufacturers as well as the inheritors. Disraeli was astute enough to realise Burke's dictum that: "A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation". (60). The sense of an ending is achieved in Disraeli's clear perception of the importance of an alliance of power between Coningsby representing the old patrician Tory aristocracy and the

Millbanks representing the industrial aristocracy when Coningsby marries Edith Millbank. With this merger of the aristocracy of talent with the aristocracy of inheritance, optimism and faith in Coningsby represent optimism and faith in the future of the nation.

As Disraeli writes in his biography of Lord George Bentinck: "It is not true that England is governed by an aristocracy in the common acceptance of the term. England is governed by an aristocratic principle". (61). In Coningsby we are asked to recognise that there are other values than those of the prevailing dominant society. The forward movement of history involves losses as well as gains. Both Scott and Disraeli balance empiricism and idealism, the old world and the new.

Waverley and Coningsby were both published at times when Britain was facing periods of mounting unrest and disruption. The forces of conservatism had successfully checked the thrust towards the radical social change associated with the French Revolution. The British Critic reviewing Waverley in August 1814 spoke of "the spirit of discord" in the country. Waverley was "an early and awful warning" against this, and Disraeli's later novel has a similar function. Both Scott and Disraeli speak for harmony, stability, peace, and social and political cohesion. They offer a view of life through the form of the "Bildungsroman" that balances the personal desire for freedom and power with the social necessity for order. They show that to live in a world where history is destiny, human beings must adapt to survive, change and

diversify, act as if they were free, master themselves and bring their own desires into line with existing necessities.

Disraeli stopped short of conflict within Coningsby, and moved away from the realm of the questionable by opposing Rigby against Coningsby in a fairy tale romance opposition of right versus wrong. The false Rigby, the sincere Coningsby, guided by the judge Sidonia demonstrate the all pervasive opposition of right and wrong and the symbolic legitimation of the existing order of the aristocracy. In Disraeli's ensuring that Coningsby receives justice, he emphasizes the novel's fairy-tale quality with a happy ending. Coningsby, the talented representative of the aristocratic class has been put on trial, and through his youth judged to be competent to regenerate the nation. Coningsby has the nature of the true aristocrat, a true leader ready to assume his social responsibility:

"Distinction is the basis of aristocracy..."

"And where will you find your natural aristocracy?" asked Coningsby.

"Among those men whom a nation recognises as the most eminent for virtue, talents, and property, and, if you please, birth and standing in the land. They guide opinion; and, therefore, they govern. I am no leveller; I look upon an artificial equality as equally pernicious with a factitious aristocracy; both depressing the energies, and checking the enterprise of a nation. (C p.180).

Coningsby represents an old world destined to guide present society which has lost both its integrity and honour. He serves as a reminder of other possible worlds and other values. The past is invoked by Disraeli as an alternative source

**of values. Medieval feudal society had its own deficiencies, but the past exemplified values that English society might emulate.**

**Disraeli and Young England's suggestion of a return to chivalric values raises the question of how anything resembling a feudal code of honour could be found in the very different society of the 1840s. When Disraeli finally held office, he found that while paternalism was necessary its source was the state, not the landowner nor the manufacturer. It was perhaps unrealistic of Disraeli to posit this as a possible world for if, in the course of historical development, particular types of societal organisation have withered away, the values he associates with them were only the subject of nostalgia and fairy-tale, a background through which to approach the development of his hero Coningsby, for chivalry and the past could never really be the source of alternatives.**

### **CHAPTER 3**

**Sybil as "Bildungsroman": vocation as a model  
for the authentic activity of a life.**



Dilthey's use of the term "Bildungsroman" in his Leben Schleiermachers (1870), in which he wrote that he proposed to call those novels "which make up the school of Wilhelm Meister...Bildungsromane" (1), is largely responsible for the notion that portrayal of an individual's "Bildung" is the essential characteristic of the genre. In this interpretation, "Bildung" denotes a pursuit of harmonious self-development, generally conducted at a distance from the arena of public experience.

Obviously Contarini Fleming and Coningsby are about the development of their heroes of the same name, but one of the distinctive aspects of the "Bildungsroman" is that, despite the implications of the generic name, the development of the hero is not the ultimate concern, the "raison d'être" of the "Bildungsroman". Rather, it is the growth towards maturity, undertaken in the service of a further end. Lukács has asserted that:

The robust sense of security underlying this type of novel arises then, from the relativation of its central character, which in turn is determined by a belief in the possibility of common destinies and life-formations. (2).

Disraeli's Contarini Fleming failed to avoid the danger of subjectivity which was not exemplary, and the hero embarked on a purely personal quest; Contarini Fleming lived in conflict, and at the end of the novel, in solitude. In Coningsby Disraeli did not succeed in escaping the danger of romanticising reality to the point where it became "a sphere totally beyond reality", (3), moving away from the realm of the questionable in a fairy-tale romance opposition of right versus

wrong. Neither of these novels has as their theme "the reconciliation of the problematic individual, guided by his lived experience of the ideal, with concrete social reality". (4)

In Sybil or the Two Nations, published in 1845, Disraeli uses the hero's development as a means to a further end. He dismisses the fairy-tale element he used in Coningsby, and deals with some issues characteristic of the classical "Bildungsroman" of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister. However Disraeli's protagonist Charles Egremont is no longer the innocent and "insipid" hero in the way Coningsby is insipid. Rather he is introduced as a young adult with a more forceful and marked personality which is perceived as unusual and disturbing:

Egremont had been brought up in the enjoyment of every comfort and every luxury that refinement could devise and wealth furnish. He was a favourite child. His parents emulated each other in pampering and indulging him. Every freak was pardoned, every whim was gratified.....If he were not a thoroughly selfish and altogether wilful person, but very much the reverse, it was not the fault of his parents, but rather the operation of a benignant nature that had bestowed on him a generous spirit and a tender heart, though accompanied with a dangerous susceptibility that made him the child and creature of impulse, and seemed to set at defiance even the course of time to engraft on his nature any quality of prudence. [S pp.33-34].

As in Coningsby the background characters are still to a large extent comic and unalterable, basking in such names as Captain Grouse who was "a kind of aide-de-camp of the earl; killed birds and carved them" [S p.51], "one McDrugg, fresh from Canton, with a million of opium in each pocket, denouncing corruption, and bellowing free trade" [S pp.54-55], and Sir Vavasour Firebrace, Devilsdust, Dandy Mick and Mr Slimsy. But they are active as expressions of that socio-cultural inertia which places them in opposition to the protagonist

**Egremont. Egremont's elder brother Lord Marney is characterised as one of his antagonists having become "estranged", and never "excessively cordial", whose countenance "bespoke the character of his mind; cynical, devoid of sentiment, arrogant, literal, hard. He had no imagination, had exhausted his slight native feeling, but he was acute, disputatious, and firm even to obstinacy". [S p.50].**

**Once the protagonist is no longer an innocent, then the plot can dispense with the fairy-tale framework. Egremont, after the traditional Eton and Oxford education was a vacuous naïf who knew nothing, in the manner of Disraeli's later heroes, Endymion and Lothair. Once the "principle of his existence" was "Enjoyment, not ambition". [S p.34], but after a disastrous love affair he travels abroad and returns to England "after a year and a half's absence, a much wiser man". [S p.40].**

**Disraeli indulges in a little Socratic philosophy when he indicates that after Egremont's travels his energies began to stir and his mind opened which led him to investigate and read:**

**....he discovered that, when he imagined his education was completed, it had in fact not commenced;....To be conscious that you are ignorant is a great step to knowledge. [S p.40].**

**Here Disraeli uses his own experience of travel (5), and its educational worth. In a letter from Lyons to his sister Sarah he wrote in 1826:**

**Nothing can have been more prosperous than our whole journey....I have got all the kind of knowledge that I desired, and much more, but that much more I am convinced was equally necessary. To discover**

**new wants and find them instantly gratified - or rather to discover unexpected necessities anticipated, is the most pleasing of all things.  
(6)**

**The "Bildungsroman" can be said to represent growth towards maturity of a sensitive individual. Charles Egremont has an exacting nature, is aware of his own worth, is devoted to a dream and consequently finds it hard to come to terms with reality. However the "Bildungsroman" stresses that as part of a quest for an understanding of the processes of growth towards maturity, the life that people lead in the everyday world is a fiction. They display a literary self-consciousness, which creates an additional narrative plane, over and above the history of the development of the individual. The entire narrative can be viewed as fiction rather than an empirically accurate representation. Therefore rather than the novel being only "about" the development of the hero, the hero's development is relativised by a wider claim that the narrative of the hero's experiences offers insights into human nature which would be inadequately conveyed in a discursive argument or a non-self-conscious fiction.**

## I

Egremont's dream is the notion that one's identity is not inherited but created, which returns to the classical ideal of "Bildung", which is reformulated as a vocation. The idea of vocation embodies a synthesis of individual expression and collective benefit; the more the protagonist is able to be himself, the greater the progress which will take place. Vocation may be political, artistic, social or religious; in Sybil Egremont's vocation is both political and social. It can be argued that one of the secondary characters, Aubrey St. Lys, the vicar of Mowbray has a religious vocation; he thought that:

For all that has occurred, or may occur....I blame only the Church. The Church deserted the people; and from that moment the Church has been in danger, and the people degraded. [S p.129].

The ideal of vocation is an ambitious goal, and one that is greater than the individual development and social integration characteristic of the classical "Bildungsroman". The historical nature of the novelistic world of, for example, Contarini Fleming needed to be repressed, but in Sybil the synthesis of the highly motivated individual and the social structure can occur only if history moves forward and progress is achieved.

Like many of his contemporaries Disraeli was troubled by the implications of the "machine age" and mechanistic explanations for traditional views about the status and nature of man. His novel, Contarini Fleming, traced the career of a highly ambitious individual while Coningsby charted the course of a representative of the aristocracy as he moved through the labyrinth of

possibilities created by a society in ferment. What distinguishes Sybil from both of these is that Disraeli sets out to assess the human possibilities of vocation. He begins to examine how far the conditions of the age made it possible for the impulse towards self-aggrandizing ambition and the impulse towards a selfless contribution to society could be united in a single life.

Beyond providing a useful service, action for Disraeli is a significant means of self-realisation, and of contributing to the progress of mankind, which he began to see at the end of Contarini Fleming where Winter tells Fleming that having developed his faculties a man must "put his intelligence in motion. Act, act, act; act without ceasing, and you will no longer talk of the vanity of life". [CF p.361]. For Disraeli political life was a fulfilment of what George Eliot in Scenes of Clerical Life spoke of as "that idea of duty, that recognition of something to be lived for beyond the mere satisfaction of self". (7) The spiritualisation of action is a secularised version of the Puritan belief that a man is called by God to a specific worldly vocation, and that his success is a token of his salvation.

All George Eliot's novels are studies in human relationships, individual growth, moral argument and analyse contemporary Victorian society. Her work reflects her favourite keyword "reform" and the focus is on the experiences of vocation. In Egremont's case too, there is a promise of commitment to change society. Vocation has to be worked for and won, but the difference between novels of love and novels of vocation means that in the novel of vocation the focus is on stages of disillusionment and breakdown rather than

on the intense early life of a relationship. In Sybil we are led to expect that Egremont's means of realising himself will be his own work. If, in the past, a man could realise himself by occupying a position in society by being a gentleman, the Victorian period saw men judged by their contribution. A man's actions had been transformed into a struggle, if not to change, then to regenerate the world.

In Felix Holt George Eliot created an individual of will and passion who longs to do some great good for society. He appeals to the hearts of the workers to educate themselves and to make use of their opportunities. He is a man with a mission who has been "called" and entrusted with a task by an outside agent. Felix Holt, Charles Egremont and Aubrey St. Lys share the sense of having been called, and a belief that their vocation serves a higher purpose and an acceptance of responsibility for the affairs of the world.

## II

During the nineteenth-century at times work was seen as a counter therapy for the Romantic introspective despair. In the main the representation by prose fiction criticised work in the same way as it criticised other emergent features of industrial society. The usual contrast was an idealised image of the benevolent aristocrat and the traditional rural craftsman contrasted with the degrading and arduous conditions of factory work. In Sybil Disraeli is always assumed to be addressing the "Condition of England" question already addressed by Carlyle in his long pamphlet Chartism published in 1839 in which he identified the movement as an alarming manifestation of social unrest and political instability. I first of all want to discuss why Disraeli was addressing the "Condition of England" question which had already been identified, and the reasons for his use of the industrial background.

When Sybil was published its theme provoked many reviews. W.R.

Greg wrote in the Westminster Review that:

Sybil pretends to be something more and something loftier than a novel: it is put forward by the author as a correct picture of the state and the wants of the people, addressed to the higher classes of his countryman, and proceeds upon two preliminary assumptions, - Mr D'Israeli's profound acquaintance with the subject, - and his reader's profound ignorance of it. We search in vain for evidence of an unaffected sympathy for the miseries of the mass of the people, or a wish to bring the working classes, for benevolent purposes, under the attention of the rich and the great. (8)

In this criticism Greg draws attention to Disraeli's use of the industrial state as material which might be 'exploité' for the advantage of the artist. Thackeray in



the Morning Chronicle was quite restrained in his review recognising that Disraeli was 'ardent in good wishes for the people':

....a main part of his novel is devoted to speculations upon their future, and descriptions of their present, condition....His aim would appear to be to take a glance at the whole cycle of labour: from the agricultural he takes us to the manufacturing and the mining districts. Here, as we fancy, his descriptions fail; not from want of sympathy, but from want of experience and familiarity with the subject. (9)

However Lord John Manners is identified by Disraeli as the reviewer of Sybil in the first number of The Oxford and Cambridge Review; it is a bland and pedestrian review but promotes the beliefs of the Young England group:

All classes were benefited by the monasteries; but conspicuously the poor: for poverty was by and through them regarded throughout the Christian world as holy; poverty is now a crime, and wealth sacred. If the poor are ever again in England to regain their rights, and true position in the Christian scheme, it will be through the re-establishment of that system which fell before the cupidity of Henry....a "free monarchy" demands a free church, and if England suffers for want of the former, the absence of the latter is even a still greater and more severely felt evil....Mr Disraeli seems to us to understand the true position which the clergy should adopt. (10).

The standard view of the novel since the time of its publication has been that it is a social document, a consideration of the condition of the people and a significant contribution as a work of critical realism.

In his study of the development of the political novel in both England and America, Morris E. Speare referred to Sybil as "a portrait of the WORKING CLASS" and compared it with Victor Hugo's Les Misérables (11). A.N. Jeffares wrote in the introduction to the re-issue of Nelson's edition of Sybil in 1957 that the novel, as well as being one "of human contrasts, of political events, is a social

document, a consideration of the condition of the people. Disraeli was well-equipped to write such a novel". (12). In her study of England in the early industrial age, The Idea of Poverty, Gertrude Himmelfarb cites Sybil and links it with the work of Dickens calling it "an upper class version of Hard Times", although it is the "sense of verisimilitude that spills over" even into the melodramatic and satirical passages which finally makes Sybil "a social novel rather than a silver fork novel". (13). Both his recent biographers, Robert Blake (14) and Sarah Bradford (15) write about Sybil as a social document devoted to contrasting the wide gulf between the rich and the industrial poor who lived in miserable conditions. Most recently John Vincent is still following the traditional interpretation of Sybil as a social novel which "introduces us to the poor, both urban and rural. We see their poverty, their animality, and their political aspirations". (16).

It was with Lord John Manners (17) that, in 1844, Disraeli had inspected and examined the varying conditions of the northern industrial areas. Walter Sichel in an introduction to Sybil wrote in 1926:

Two years after his entrance into Parliament he had delivered a speech on Chartism which remains unrivalled in width and length of view...Afterwards followed his championship of measures to deal with the abuses of child-labour, and his persistent endeavours for social and sanitary reform, culminating in the long series of stable statutes during his last premiership. (18)

Early nineteenth-century reformers' concern for the poor and the necessity for removing social evils gave an added publicity to the polemic against what was bad in society. The distorted view was fuelled by the Victorian social novelists whose

descriptions were often exaggerated, and their settings frequently anachronistic which has left a permanent confusion about the nature of Victorian society.

The social novel demonstrates public concern, and the social protest novel from about 1840 was a form of social concern and conscience. However, along with other Victorian "social" novelists Disraeli's Sybil was merely reflecting an interest, and did not create it. Nineteenth-century social criticism, whether its focus was on individuals, or politics or social structures was generally moral in character. Its crucial terms can be expressed as selfishness and the commonweal, corruption and virtue, or oppression and justice. When something is "rotten in the state of Denmark" (19) the rot is usually an incorrect practice, policy or set of relationships, and the role of the social critic is to describe what is wrong in ways that suggest a remedy. But in Sybil Disraeli is continually tempted to elevate his description so that it not only supplements, but effectively supplants, his original perception of "rottenness".

The critic speaks out in defiance of established powers, and Disraeli is the "hero" under the influence of Romantic ideas of heroism. The social critic can be motivated by anger at injustice, sympathy for the oppressed or ambition for power, but underlying all or any of these, by the imitation of heroism. Because criticism is different from common complaint the critic stands outside and above the common herd, both morally and intellectually. Disraeli's heroism begins, even before the criticism in Sybil begins, precisely because Disraeli breaks himself loose and establishes his distance. Sybil was merely following fashion and

not pioneering it, for there had already been twelve years of public debate on the problems of the industrial poor commencing with the Factory Acts of 1833. (20)

Charles Egremont, as the hero of Sybil, is a generous and enthusiastic cross between Disraeli and Lord John Manners, who espouses the cause of the oppressed workers, and despite his opposition to their "machinery", speaks for the Chartists when in fact Chartism was in decline; in 1846 the Corn Laws were repealed and trade improved in many sectors of industry (21). If the intention of the social novel was to direct readers to new and important truths, it was between 1815 and 1825 when the particular problems of the industrial working-classes were struggling for recognition, that the novels were required. Even in 1815 the issues confronting British society were more complicated than simply that of industrialization (22). Because industrialization came in a certain set of historical circumstances, these circumstances have been regarded, not as accidental accompaniments, but intrinsic features, and industrialization is regarded as being responsible for the increase in population of the towns and the health and sanitation problems associated with urbanisation.

Sybil therefore is ostensibly concerned with the "Condition of England" question and Disraeli paints many vivid pictures of squalor:

Twelve hours of daily labour, at the rate of one penny each hour; and even this labour is mortgaged!...And he looked around him at his chamber without resources: no food, no fuel, no furniture, and four human beings dependent on him, and lying in their wretched beds, because they had no clothes. [S p.133]

But the novel's concern is not a narrow question of social problems limited to Chartism, the Poor Laws and factories. The novel's primary concern is with what terms was power to be held on and how far did Church and State need to be modified to keep the "status quo" and strengthen the position of the aristocracy, the natural leaders of England. The problem, as Disraeli saw it, was not primarily one of poverty; his concern as I have already discussed with reference to Coningsby, was who would use the poor as a power base? The answer, as Disraeli tried to argue in Coningsby, was the members of the social aristocracy, educated to an intellectual role and becoming men of ideas. Coningsby and Sybil both feature a young representative member of the social elite on a quest for education and ideas in order that they might lead the nation.

George Eliot's Jews in Daniel Deronda are ideal representatives of a semitic world, placed in ideal contrast to a very sharply satirized world of English genteel and non-Jewish society, in the same way that Disraeli satirises the parvenu aristocracy of Egremont's family, but portrays in an almost entirely approving way the trials of the people of Mowbray. Eliot's scenes of high society are no mere renunciation of Disraeli's and Bulwer-Lytton's fashionable silver-fork novels which she had criticized in her early writings, but a satirical account of superficial culture, insincerity, mercenariness and triviality from which Disraeli too had moved after Henrietta Temple and The Young Duke (23).

Sybil is not a novel of compassion for the poor, although the speech by the "younger stranger" leads the reader to expect that the novel is about the

social problem. The words are spoken by the journalist and Owenite socialist Stephen Morley, and Sybil does not endorse Owenite socialism, representing, as it did the struggle to achieve equality and freedom at every level of social existence. It is rather a novel of detachment. While it attempts a portrayal of the structure of society as a whole, it is more concerned with the social elite. The solution to the problems of society lay in the realm of belief in a common culture. Practical proposals which had been suggested by, for example, Carlyle in Chartism and Mrs Gaskell in Mary Barton such as emigration, education, Corn Law repeal, Poor Law reform, and the factory movement were rejected by Disraeli as inadequate because they were too specific. Disraeli, however, borrowed from Carlyle the idea that aristocratic idleness had to be exorcised if English society was to be saved. The essence of Victorian paternalism was the belief that the wealthy and powerful had duties to perform as well as rights to enjoy. Carlyle despaired at the fate of the aristocracy and therefore the country in which "a thinking eye discerns ghastly images of ruin", counselling them to "ascertain if no work exist for thee on God's Earth; if thou find no commanded-duty there but that of going gracefully idle?" The aristocracy, he wrote in Past and Present, would discover that the possession of land obliges them "to furnish guidance and governance to England" and to care for those who are "ploughing, ditching, day-drudging; bare of back, empty of stomach, nigh desperate of heart". (24) Disraeli opted for class peace and co-operation, not a legislative formula.

The thrust is that, like Coningsby, the novel is aimed at the "do-nothing" aristocracy; poverty and its relief was not the theme of Sybil but was

used to point to the opportunities that were open to a re-educated aristocracy, an aristocracy as it ought to be. Egremont's growing awareness and change of direction is indicated half-way through the novel in Book III with the exchange of views with his elder brother Lord Marney whom he sees as grinding the Yorkshire poor into the mud of his estates:

"I am your elder brother, sir, whose relationship to you is your only claim to the consideration of society".

"A curse on the society that has fashioned such claims", said Egremont in a heightened tone - "claims founded in selfishness, cruelty, and fraud, and leading to demoralisation, misery, and crime". [S p.179].

The aristocracy as it was, rather than as it ought to be is outlined right at the start of Sybil. Disraeli portrays young aristocrats who had "exhausted life in their teens" and who "feel so cursed blasé" that they "rather like bad wine",....."one gets so bored with good wine" [S pp.2-3], and who pass over art, science and music in favour of dinners and horses.

The aristocracy and gentry were successful in retaining both the substance of their traditional political power and the social deference of other influential classes. Concessions were made, together with some adjustments to the machinery of administration and some measure of social and political equality admitted, and importantly for Disraeli, a larger responsibility of the rich towards the poor accepted. It was this facet which he chose to emphasise while exaggerating the conditions of the poor. However it had the desired effect of shocking a concerned public and bringing him once again into the public arena.

Lord John Manners had made a speech on 26 August 1844 at the Birmingham Athenic Institution which Disraeli refers to in a letter of 15 September 1844:

....you doubtless observed the leader in the "Times", in wh: we stood tog[ethe]r in our chivalry, & I stumbled, a few days back, on a "Spectator" wherein the whole affair is highly lauded/& moralised over, & yourself placed on a pedestal [DL IV p.144].

This speech had drawn attention to the need for "a cordial union" between the various classes of society and The Times on 4 September 1844 had reprinted part of the report of the Birmingham Journal and commented favourably in a leader on it as well as Disraeli's recent speech at Shrewsbury; Manners was "placed on a pedestal" for having denounced the "modern system" of society with its two classes, "and two only - rich and poor". The Spectator referred to by Disraeli was that of 7 September which had particularly mentioned Manner's call for a "fusion of classes" which was at that time being discussed by Young England; Smythe (25) in a letter to Disraeli had asked "How are the two Nations?" (26)

At this time too Disraeli, when visiting the northern industrial districts had made a speech at the Manchester Athenaeum, and at Bingley, Yorkshire on 11 October 1844 had expounded the aims of Young England which sounded a keynote to Sybil:

We are asked sometimes what we want. We want in the first place to impress upon society that there is such a thing as duty. We don't do that in any spirit of conceit or arrogance; we don't pretend that we are better than others, but we are anxious to do our duty, and, if so, we think we have a right to call on others, whether rich or poor, to do theirs. If that principle of duty had not been lost sight of for the last fifty years, you would never have heard of the classes into which England is divided....



**We want to put an end to that political and social exclusiveness which we believe to be the bane of this country....We see but little hope for this country so long as that spirit of faction that has been so rampant of late years is fostered and encouraged. We call it a spirit of faction, for the principle on which the parties who nominally divide this country were originally formed have worn out and ceased to exist; and an association of men, however powerful, without political principle is not a party, but a faction. Of such a state of society the inevitable result is that public passions are excited for private ends, and popular improvement is lost sight of in particular aggrandisement. (27)**

**Disraeli's point is that "aristocracy" is a set of rules to be learned, and is neither blood nor pedigree.**

### III

Early on in Sybil Disraeli emphasises that Egremont's family, the Marneys are "parvenu" aristocracy and their pedigree will not stand scrutiny. The point is that the British aristocracy are not inherently aristocratic and their defects cannot be excused on grounds of blood. The Marney's neighbours, the Earls de Mowbray (Fitz-Warenes) cannot trace their descent back further than Warren an astute club waiter who rose under George IV.

Disraeli and the middle-classes are also therefore capable of becoming aristocratic through merit and original ideas; the art of governing is a skill, not a social position. Egremont tells Sybil that:

The world that exists is not the world of which you have read; the class that calls itself your superior is not the same class as ruled in the time of your fathers. There is a change in them as in all other things, and I participate in that change. [S p.321]

Charles Egremont, Lord Marney's younger brother is engaged in the learning process. Sybil is a "Bildungsroman" of a class representative and, rather than a "social" novel, is a novel of vocation, sharing similarities with Daniel Deronda who is also the representative of the ethic of vocation in George Eliot's last novel.

The novel Daniel Deronda is a study in individual growth; the career of Deronda is of considerable social and political interest as a study of a leader and a Jew. There are qualities in the personalities of both Egremont and Deronda which demonstrate that Disraeli and Eliot were attempting to portray their

protagonists as complicated, changing, moving and aware of the problems of being a hero. They are both susceptible to the feelings and causes of others and both have a personal excess of empathy and open-mindedness; both are shown to some extent in the process of growing. Like Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, they serve an apprenticeship and each searches for relationships and a vocation.

Egremont, a scion of a great family, is expected by social convention to fulfil a predetermined pattern, but his disillusionment with his expected paradigm of development gradually re-educates him to a new set of values. Implicit in Carlyle's denunciation of the idleness of the aristocracy is an enthusiasm for work, and in Deronda and Egremont's case it is a selfless submission to duty that will help to further the progress of mankind. Egremont's elder brother, as head of the family, typifies the aristocrat who ignores the interests of the common people. Deronda is a man of destiny who had "the stamp of rarity" [DD p.218] in his "subdued fervour of sympathy, an activity of imagination on behalf of others" [DD p.218]. Whereas both Deronda and Egremont could live for self, and be unable to conceive of other people living from their separate centres of consciousness, they both live at extremes of altruism, and the centre of self exists chiefly as a mirror for other lives. Like Egremont, Deronda is concerned with political life, problems of leadership and social order.

Both Egremont and Daniel Deronda have in common a lack of any real work. Therefore, in order to assess the possibilities of work, Disraeli allows Egremont's metamorphosis into Franklin. Franklin/Egremont then adopts a

rustic life, sympathising with the psychological and physical conditions of others, developing a concept of responsibility which will give life meaning:

If we look back on those passages of our life which dwell most upon the memory, they are brief periods full of action and novel sensation. Egremont found this so during the first days of his new residence in Mowedale. The first week, an epoch in his life, seemed an age; at the end of the first month, he began to deplore the swiftness of time, and almost to moralise over the brevity of existence. He found that he was leading a life of perfect happiness, but of remarkable simplicity; he wished it might never end....The day that commenced early, was passed in reading; books lent him often, too, by Sybil Gerard. [S pp.225-226].

Having adopted the belief that man is unable to fulfil himself in private life he places the gratification of self after service to the people, believing that:

The People are not strong; the People can never be strong. Their attempts at self-vindication will end only in their suffering and confusion. It is civilisation that has effected, that is effecting, this change. It is that increased knowledge of themselves that teaches the educated their social duties....The new generation of the aristocracy of England are not tyrants, not oppressors....Their intelligence, better than that, their hearts, are open to the responsibility of their position...They are the natural leaders of the People.... [S pp.321-322].

Throughout Sybil Disraeli follows the prophetic stance of Carlyle, whose use of medieval chivalry contributed the heroic to the ethos of vocation. The possibility of the heroic mind and the effects it can have on their followers is demonstrated by indicating that leadership by extraordinary men, is preferable to representative government.

There are two aspects which connect to make up the experience of vocation which can be identified as a discipline of the self, and the commitment to the end beyond the self. Egremont, in an era of "reform", is a character who has

the possibility of being nurtured by a sense of social hopefulness. "Reform" was confident of its power to abolish abuses, and benevolence still hoped to ameliorate the moral condition of the poor. These causes served as idealistic ends to give dignity to Egremont's individual enterprise, and consequently to use vocation as a model for the authentic activity of a life.

Disraeli wrote seeing possibilities for himself in a role encompassing exalted action. The alternative possible outcome for his character Egremont was either capitulation to a world in which ambition can never transcend itself, the renunciation of personal ambition and a slippage into Utopia, or the elevation of ambition beyond society into messianism. There is a combination in Sybil for Egremont. Both Egremont and Eliot's Deronda try to reach beyond the modes of self-transcendence available in England. For Deronda, the vocational impulse is decisively split into good ambition and bad ambition characterised by Deronda and Gwendolen Harleth. Egremont and Deronda have an almost messianic longing to do something great for their people, while Gwendolen Harleth's ambition is an emblem of pure will with no pretence of benevolence and Egremont's brother, Marney, is used purely as an emblem of the dysfunction of the aristocracy.

In Sybil, as well as in Daniel Deronda there is a certain sacrifice of individual personality by the hero in this "age of the masses". Egremont's personality is perfectly suited to the task at hand, but he is not dedicated to an ideal so much as he is a functionary of abstract belief. So despite his brief

change of name to Franklin in order to sympathise with the physical condition of the masses, his vocation does not demand self-repression, because there is no real conflict with the world, no risking of his individuality, therefore no renunciation. Rather Egremont is compensated by a final fairy-tale reward in marrying Sybil.

In talking about charismatic leadership Max Weber thought:

There is the authority of the extraordinary and personal gift of grace (charisma) the absolutely personal devotion and personal confidence in revelation, heroism, or other qualities of individual leadership. This is "charismatic" domination, as exercised by the prophet or - in the field of politics - by the elected war lord, the plebiscitarian ruler, the great demagogue, or the political party leader. (28).

Weber talks about the domination by virtue of the devotion of those who obey the purely personal "charisma" of the "leader". For this is the root of the idea of a calling in its highest expression. Devotion to charisma means that the leader is personally recognised as the innerly "called" leader of men. Men do not obey by virtue of tradition or statute, but because they believe in him. Egremont runs for Parliament, is elected and comes to understand about the rural poor on his brother's estates and the urban poor created by the industrial revolution. Learning that aristocratic and political life ignores the needs of a discontented and miserable population, he upholds the rights of labour in Parliament. Egremont is a perfect example of Disraeli's belief that a man can not fulfil himself in private life, but rather requires a position with defined responsibilities to give life meaning. This is contrary to the emphasis on private fulfilment, either through communion with nature or through love, which was common in the literature of the nineteenth-century.

Egremont does not possess the same degree of personal magnetism and heroic potential that Coningsby was supposed to possess, but he continually demonstrates judgment, sympathy and integrity. Charismatic leadership, according to Weber (29) emerged most importantly in "the two figures of the magician and the prophet". This is not far removed from political leadership and the notion of politics as a "calling". But there are two ways of making politics one's vocation - either living for politics or living off politics - which are not mutually exclusive. Egremont is an example of the person who lives for politics, who makes politics his life in an internal sense. In the sense in which Weber uses it, however, he "nourishes his inner balance and self-feeling by the consciousness that his life has meaning in the service of a 'cause'" (30), and consequently in the internal sense that every man who lives for a cause also lives off this cause.

Deronda's guardian Sir Hugo Mallinger does not understand why he declines to take up politics as a public vocation. Deronda's reason is that he cannot persuade himself to look at politics as a profession: "I don't want to make a living out of opinions...especially out of borrowed opinions". [DD p.434] Sir Hugo quotes Napoleon's "Je suis un ancêtre", which can be understood as "having given birth to myself I am my own ancestor", although the example of Napoleon can be seen as advocating a career of imperial individualism in which it is the power of self-creation rather than the past to which success is owed. Julien Sorel was tied to the values of an historical period that was over and was therefore faced with the choice of remaining faithful to those values, and consequently being excluded from the new context, or "creating" a self to achieve

a satisfactory social position. Sorel dreams of Napoleon in order not to become a petty bourgeois of Verrières. Deronda and Egremont see politics as too important to be compromised by the exigencies of popular sentiment or income, but rather take the view that opinions should be formulated disinterestedly. Egremont longs to live among the masses:

And are these then THE PEOPLE? If so, thought Egremont, would that I lived more among them! Compared with their converse, the tattle of our saloons has in it something humiliating. It is not merely that it is deficient in warmth, and depth, and breadth; that it is always discussing persons instead of principles, and cloaking its want of thought in mimetic dogmas, and its want of feeling in superficial raillery; it is not merely that it has neither imagination, nor fancy, nor sentiment, nor feeling, nor knowledge to recommend it; but it appears to me, even as regards manner and expression, inferior in refinement and phraseology; in short, trivial, uninteresting, stupid, really vulgar. [S pp.153-154].

It is Deronda's guardian who distinguishes between the secular and the prophetic notions of calling. While the prophet suffers no uncertainty about the terms of his mission, it is not prophets, Sir Hugo argues, who are equipped to run the country:

The business of the country must be done...And it never could be, my boy, if everybody looked at politics as if they were prophecy, and demanded an inspired vocation. [DD p.434].

But it is precisely the prophetic conception of vocation that Deronda and Egremont require, wanting to reach beyond politics and rejecting it as a vocation, and instead seeing it as a redeemer:

It seemed to Egremont that, from the day he met these persons in the Abbey ruins, the horizon of his experience had insensibly expanded; more than that, there were streaks of light breaking in the distance, which already gave a new aspect to much that was known, and which perhaps was ultimately destined to reveal much that was now utterly obscure. He could not resist the conviction that, from the time in



**question, his sympathies had become more lively and more extended; that a masculine impulse had been given to his mind; that he was inclined to view public questions in a light very different from that in which he had surveyed them a few weeks back, when on the hustings of his borough. [S p.154].**

**When Egremont effects a complete identification with the poor, and Deronda with the Jewish nation, the attributes of their individuality are absorbed in their respective roles. It effectively closes the gap between individuality of the self and the demands of their professional roles, and they become heroes who exist as nothing other than their vocation.**

**The Victorian political personality perfected is exemplified by Egremont and Deronda; they have finely developed sympathetic imaginations and are both adept at "seeing things as they probably appeared to others". [DD p.412] Their sensitivities are commendable but do little to help either select a cause that would gather, rather than diffuse, their energies. Too "plenteous" and "flexible" sympathy ends by "falling into one current with that reflective analysis which tends to neutralise sympathy". [DD p.412]**

**Disraeli in trying to gain sympathy for Egremont's "cause" heaps up examples from the Blue Books; all things become deserving of the attention of both narrator and reader, and the response to so many claims leads either to a paralysis like Deronda's, poised on the edge of a future left vague and in mid-career or to a flow of writing which is formless and lacks selectivity. If Disraeli's writing was to articulate human suffering, it follows that he had to choose some**

**particulars for accentuation and representation and ignore others; moral sympathy is turned by selection into narrative art.**

Because Disraeli was a product of his time his career cannot be understood without reference to the religious dimension. Religious questions were far too important in early and mid-Victorian politics for Disraeli to stand aside from them. The position of the Church of England was challenged on several fronts and the Conservatives were expected to defend it against initiatives from both nonconformists and Roman Catholics. Religion was a recurring theme throughout his career; he never underestimated the importance of the Church of England as a pillar of the state and the social order, nor did he underestimate the power of religion to command the hearts and minds of the governors, and more particularly, the governed.

The Church of England was under siege at the beginning of Disraeli's political career and it remained so throughout (31). Like other Conservatives he understood the church and monarchy as mutually reinforcing systems of support which gave moral sanction and justification to the social order. The belief that the Church of England had to be protected as a bulwark against revolution, a protector of property, hierarchy and traditional liberties was fundamental to its defence.

Carlyle in Chartism deplored the decay of loyalty and religious faith in the lower classes all over Europe, and while he particularly singled out France, it was more notable in England than elsewhere:

The Working Classes cannot any longer go on without government; without being actually guided and governed; England cannot subsist in peace till, by some means or other, some guidance and government for them is found...We have a Church, the venerable embodiment of an idea which may well call itself divine...We have an Aristocracy of landed wealth and commercial wealth, in whose hands lies the law making and the law-administering;...This Church answers: Yes, the

people are taught. This Aristocracy, astonishment in every feature, answers: yes, surely the people are guided!...Nay, at bottom, is it not a singular thing this of "Laissez-faire", from the first origin of it? As good as an abdication on the part of governors...

Soul is kindled only by soul. To "teach" religion, the first thing needful, and also the last and the only thing, is finding of a man who has religion. All else follows from this,...

From which we for our part conclude that the method of teaching religion to the English people is still far behind-hand. (32).

While France was held up as chief exhibit, the edge was given to speculation on the causal relationship of disbelief and disorder by their particular application to the lower classes. Cardinal Newman too had written that "The lowest class, which is most numerous, and is infidel, will rise up from the depths of the modern cities and will be the new scourges of God". (33).

The fear of social unrest was partly explained by the decline of faith among the working class frequently neglected in the new industrial towns by the Church of England. However the Church was not only embattled against external forces, but was riven by internal conflict, as factions struggled to promote versions of its identity and message. Disraeli's idiosyncratic religious attitudes are manifest in Sybil in his idealised version of the medieval Catholic Church and its monasteries as generous landlords and benefactors of the poor. This is a reflection of Carlyle's Past and Present (1843) which has as its second book "The Ancient Monk" describing life in the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds in the late twelfth century. It provides a model of the healthy society in its moral essence; a society where men are attached to each other by bonds other than cash and recognise their superiors (34).

The heroine of Disraeli's novel, Sybil herself, believes "that those only can help themselves whom God helps". [S p.201]. The presence of Sybil is used

by Disraeli to give meaning to the idea of regenerating the Church and she becomes an emblem for the potential of the Church:

...as she moved Egremont came forth from the choir, and his eye was at once caught by the symmetry of her shape and the picturesque position which she gracefully occupied; still gazing through that grate, while the light, pouring through the western widow, suffused the body of the church with a soft radiance, just touching the head of the unknown with a kind of halo. [S p.270].

While Disraeli was a staunch political supporter of the Church of England, his own private views have been the subject of some debate, primarily because he was a Jew and baptized a Christian. In 1851, Lord Stanley wrote in his journals that in his conversations with Disraeli he noted that for Disraeli:

...politics constituted his chief, almost his sole pleasure. One other topic is a favourite: the philosophical discussion of religious questions...He seemed to think that the sentiment, or instinct, of religion, would by degrees, though slowly, vanish as knowledge became more widely spread:...If it be just the conditions of life will be worth having. Yet Disraeli is no materialist: he has always avowed his expectation of some form of future existence, though whether accompanied with any consciousness of personal identity with the self he thought it impossible to foresee (35).

Disraeli was modern in religion, accepting that the familiar beliefs of folk Christianity were no longer viable, and he appeared to hold several attitudes to religion concurrently: he rejected conventional supernatural Christianity, and believed modern thought would give Christianity a deeper meaning, rejecting in consequence conventional materialism. He also believed in the Jewishness of Christianity, writing in his Reminiscences that he looked upon the Church "as the only Jewish Institution remaining" (36). Long after Sybil was published Stanley recorded in his journal on 30 November 1861 the following observation on Disraeli:

**...I admire his perseverance not less than his talent: but how can I reconcile his open ridicule, in private, of all religions, with his preaching up of a new church-and-state agitation? or how can I help seeing that glory and power, rather than the public good, have been his objects? (37)**

**Stanley's theme was that without faith, how can there be duty?**

**However, Disraeli was trying to work towards a conception of contemporary life in all its aspects as an organic unity backed with the authority of the Church.**

**Frederick Denison Maurice had concluded in his book The Kingdom of Christ (1838) that the spiritual kingdom, of which man is a member, must be identified with the physical world in which he lived: "that the spiritual and universal society must be involved in the very idea of our human constitution, say rather, must be that constitution, by virtue of which men realise that there is a humanity, that we form a kind". (38) Maurice thought it important that the Church work to encourage human unity by stressing the unity between Christ and man, as King and subject of the spiritual kingdom, entered by the individual by baptism by right of his humanity. He argued that there were demands among working men for "a universal constitution into which men as men might enter" (39), and both Maurice and Disraeli found evidence for this spiritual constitution in the existence of families and nation which were types of a greater union. Because of the nature of English society and English character Sybil addresses the problem from the point of view that the spiritual and universal brotherhood could not exist in England apart from existing institutions, and particularly the Church of England.**

**While for Maurice it is clear that the Church, not the State would be the means of transforming England from a competitive and individualistic society**

to a co-operative and organic one, Disraeli believed that it would have a role to play. This hope for a further regeneration of society through religion combined with a nostalgic view of the Church's medieval past was part of a theory of paternalism which was developed at the time, and Disraeli learned from Maurice that the needs of the age could be a pragmatic sanction for Christianity.

Disraeli makes quite explicit his belief in the social necessity of religion in Sybil, and the following passage can be compared with his "Bingley" speech I have referred to earlier in the text [pp.143-144].

...."I prefer association to gregariousness".

...."It is a community of purpose that constitutes society",..."without that, men may be drawn into contiguity, but they still continue virtually isolated".

"...A density of population implies a severer struggle for existence, and a consequent repulsion of elements brought into too close contact. In great cities men are brought together by the desire of gain. They are not in a state of co-operation, but of isolation, as to the making of fortunes; and for all the rest they are careless of neighbours. Christianity teaches us to love our neighbour as ourself; modern society acknowledges no neighbour". [S pp.75-76].

In Sybil by providing charity and spiritual encouragement, the Catholic Sybil and Aubrey St Lys (40), the High Anglican vicar of Mowbray, demonstrate the potential of England's religious tradition working together. Opposed to this unity Disraeli places the vicar of Marney, Lord Marney's "model of a priest" who was a "model" precisely because "he left everybody alone":

Under the influence of Lady Marney, the worthy vicar had once warmed up into some ebullition of very Low Church zeal; there was some talk of an evening lecture, the schools were to be remodelled,

certain tracts were actually distributed. But Lord Marney soon stopped all this. "No priestcraft at Marney", said this gentle proprietor of abbey lands. [S p.54].

In his autobiographical writings Cardinal Newman emphasised the older requirement of "calling", that vocation's fulfilment came through religious profession and through a life within the ministry. It was Carlyle's lectures on hero-worship which brought into relief the idea of vocation, that the hero is akin to a saint who achieves worldly recognition through being called by an outside agency (41). Aubrey St Lys is used by Disraeli as a figure similar to Cardinal Newman, although he is supposedly based on Father Frederick Faber, a disciple of the Oxford Movement. His fulfilment comes through religious profession; it is St. Lys who takes Egremont to a manufacturing district and who introduces him to poverty at the home of the poor weaver. He is the cause of the rift between Egremont and his brother Lord Marney who characterises St. Lys as a "fine gentleman - saint... preaching in cottages, filling the people with discontent", and who also "lectures" Lord Marney about low wages. [S p.173] According to Egremont:

St. Lys thinks it his duty to enter all societies. That is the reason why he goes to Mowbray Castle, as well as to the squalid courts and cellars of the town. He takes care that those who are clad in purple and fine linen shall know the state of their neighbours. They cannot at least plead ignorance for the non-fulfilment of their duty. Before St. Lys's time, the family at Mowbray Castle might as well have not existed, as far as benefitting their miserable vicinage. It would be well perhaps for other families as high and favoured as the Mowbrays, if there were a Mr St. Lys on the spot instead of a Mr Slimsy.  
[S p.174]

It is not that Disraeli thought that religion was of paramount importance, but that to have a character with a religious vocation reinforced the analogy of a



calling which he required. Aubrey St. Lys is devoted to developing and refining religious doctrines, while Egremont, as Disraeli's alter ego, has a secular vocation, a calling to the cause of the poor. In the novel then "vocation" is split between the two characters of Egremont and St. Lys.

Disraeli used Sybil to condemn the deficiencies of the Church establishment, this condemnation being voiced through St. Lys, who sees the Church of England alienated from the common people instead of offering protection and solace. The emphasis which St. Lys places on spiritual awakening, and the need to recover the spiritual heritage of the Church of Rome, shows a Tractarian bias and demonstrates how the Anglican Church can carry forward the traditional services in social and spiritual affairs which it inherited from its predecessor the Catholic Church (42). Disraeli was interested in regenerating the Church of England because he saw it as an institution with a great conservative power, and he wished to use it as a mediator between monarchy and people; thus the Church was to be supported for its political value.

The presence of a number of Roman Catholic characters in the form of Sybil and her father Walter Gerard, who are both devoted to the poor, also allows criticism of Anglican practice by implication. However the criticism is not voiced through the Gerards, but again through St Lys offering the people colour and beauty in his church services. Disraeli's main interest in Catholicism was chiefly the mixture of tradition and pageantry which made up the Catholic ritual.

Egremont first sees Sybil Gerard in the Lady Chapel of the medieval Marney Abbey (43) ruined when the Catholic Church in England fell, and this "vision" perhaps most accurately represents the tradition upon which the religious aspects of Disraeli's Toryism are based:-

The divine melody ceased; the elder stranger rose; the words were on the lips of Egremont, that would have asked some explanation of this sweet and holy mystery, when, in the vacant and star-lit arch on which his glance was fixed, he beheld a female form. She was apparently in the habit of a Religious, yet scarcely could be a nun, for her veil, if indeed it were a veil had fallen on her shoulders, and revealed her thick tresses of long fair hair....a countenance which, though extremely young, was impressed with a character of almost divine majesty; while her dark eyes and long dark lashes, contrasting with the brightness of her complexion and the luxuriance of her radiant locks, combined to produce a beauty as rare as it is choice; and so strange that Egremont might for a moment have been pardoned for believing her a seraph, who had lighted on his sphere, or the fair phantom of some saint haunting the sacred ruins of her desecrated fane. [S pp.77-78].

It could also be argued that John Sterling's (44) novel Arthur Coningsby provides the religious basis for Disraeli's novel, particularly the Abbey scene and the sentiments expressed by Disraeli. Arthur Coningsby was published by Sterling, a

friend of Carlyle (45) and F.D. Maurice, in 1833, eleven years before Disraeli's own novel Coningsby (1844). The text of Disraeli's novel closely parallels that of Sterling, although Sybil's art lies in the beauty of her voice while Sterling's heroine is a painter (46). The following passage from Arthur Coningsby has many similarities with the one above quoted from Sybil:

Sitting in the shade of one of the ash-trees that grew within the precincts of the building, she had laid aside her bonnet, and her long brown hair was gently stirred about her face and neck. She bent slightly over her task, while a small fair world grew by still enchantment under her fingers. There was something eminently graceful and fascinating in the sight of the blooming girl silently intent on her task, amid a circuit of beautiful ruin and natural verdure, moralised by solemn recollections. In that venerable prospect, man, his works, his faith, and his affections, were stealing away from age to age, while she, a spirit of youthful power, sat there tranquil and lovely, and won from the lines and colours of decay the materials of a fresh creation. (47)

Implicit in these lines is that out of the decay and ruin of the Church, faith was waiting to be recreated and regenerated by the youth of the aristocracy.

Wordsworth's poetry was a continuing resource to the artists and thinkers of the early nineteenth century, offering assurance of the unity and meaning of experience and the brotherhood of man. While Shelley's political ideals were still in vogue, it was through Coleridge that Romantic ideas were most widely and explicitly disseminated. Sterling wrote that it was Coleridge who had introduced him to the most important ideas of the time:

To Coleridge I owe education. He taught me to believe that an empirical philosophy is none, that Faith is the Highest Reason, that all criticism, whether of literature, laws or manners, is blind, without the power of discerning the organic unity of the object. (48)

Carlyle in his Life of John Sterling (1851) argues that Coleridge, whom he had met in 1824, was an unfortunate influence on Sterling. Coleridge emphasised the distinction to be drawn between the material and the spiritual, a position much in common with Carlyle's. However Carlyle regarded the reformulation by Coleridge of the role of the established church as a delusion that evaded a more valid solution to the problems of the "machine age":

The constant gist of his discourse was lamentation over the sunk condition of the world; which he recognised to be given-up to Atheism and Materialism,

....

The remedy, though Coleridge himself professed to see it as in sunbeams, could not, except by processes unspeakably difficult, be described to you at all. On the whole,...,this dead English Church especially, must be brought to life again....It was not dead; the soul of it, in this parched-up body, was tragically asleep only....But how, but how! By attending to the "reason" of man, said Coleridge, and duly chaining-up the "understanding" of man: (49).

In the Life Carlyle attributed the failure of Arthur Coningsby as a novel to Coleridge's influence, referring to the novel itself as a "romance" with "some completing touches here and there....[and]...a proportion of Coleridgean moonshine at the end". (50).

The hero of Sterling's novel follows much the same course as Egremont. He is an "ardent youth", in many ways similar to Sterling himself, who is destined for a political career and who embarks on a re-education process, plunging into life:

....such as we now have it in these anarchic times, with the radical, utilitarian, or mutinous heathen theory, which is the readier for inquiring souls; finds, by various courses of adventures, utter

shipwreck in this; lies broken, very wretched:...In this mood of mind, he clutches desperately towards some new method (recognisable as Coleridge's) of laying hand again on the old Church, which has hitherto been extraneous and as if non-existent to his way of thought; makes out, by some Coleridgean legerdemain, that there actually is still a Church for him. (51).

Like Disraeli, Sterling sees the ills of England stemming from the failure of duty.

At the beginning of the novel:

Tears almost came to the eyes of Agatha, and she said, "Happy England! you have still a nation and a government". The brow of Arthur darkened, and he thought, "Alas! that so fair a land should be in the talons of monarchy, aristocracy, and an exclusive church!" (52).

Both Disraeli and Sterling appear to have thought it essential as part of the function of a novelist to present an examination of human character.

Sterling wrote a review article of Carlyle's Miscellaneous Criticism in which he takes account of an aspect of Carlyle's statement which is relevant to the business of the novelist. Carlyle identified self-consciousness as the modern disease, leading to disorientation and loss of purpose. Sterling saw the benefits of self-awareness, as a necessary characteristic of contemporary life and as a means of reaching the higher degree of Truth.

Goethe had attributed great importance to self-awareness and education in the conscious guidance of human development. Wilhelm Meister's supervised education is unique, and intended to help him develop his qualities spontaneously. Lukács, in his work Goethe and his Age argues that people should not "slavishly" obey society's moral code but rather should become sociable "by virtue of free, organic spontaneity". The development of their

individuality will then be brought into agreement with the interests of their fellow men:

Accordingly, the ideal of the "beautiful soul" stands at the centre...[and] emerges explicitly for the first time in the title of the sixth book, "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul". The "beautiful soul" in Goethe is a harmonious unity of awareness and spontaneity, of worldly activity and a harmoniously cultured inner life". (53)

Matthew Arnold waged a campaign to bring light, intellect, reason and "Geist" to the British public which was conducted mainly through the periodicals (54). Education was a central issue, because society does not need to be told what to think but how to think. Thought must come first, but ultimately lead to action. With the coming of democracy he felt the relevant question to ask was how can democracy be made to work efficiently, and was English society ready for it? He thought it entirely unfitted, with an undeveloped working class, a defunct aristocracy and a middle class crippled by an outmoded educational system, and argued for an enlightened state educational system to make people aware:

Culture without character is, no doubt, something frivolous, vain, and weak; but character without culture is, on the other hand, something raw, blind, and dangerous. (55).

In Democracy he urges the middle classes to recognise the need for critical awareness, and by means of education to develop qualities of intelligence to complement their practical virtues. The need to control and direct an expanding society by examination of the forces of change was at present beyond the middle classes. Criticism, as he wrote in The Function of Criticism at the Present Time can help by "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the

best that is known and thought in the world" (56). He thought that eventually the new ideas would prevail and grow, out of which would come the creative epochs of literature. The creation of a modern poet "implies a great critical effort behind it", and if not it would be short-lived and barren:

This is why Byron's poetry had no endurance in it, and Goethe's so much; both Byron and Goethe had a great productive power, but Goethe's was nourished by a great critical effort providing the true materials for it, and Byron's was not; Goethe knew life and the world, the poet's necessary subjects, much more comprehensively and thoroughly than Byron (57).

Literature does not attempt to direct men's thoughts on specified issues, but fosters an ability to evaluate and understand by awakening a sense of objectivity in the face of life. A great writer such as Goethe then is someone who is intensely concerned with his time, capable of seeing it in its totality and in order to convey this conception to his readers, rising above the level of interpretation by writing about his society.

According to Sterling the individual was an organism built according to the same laws as society, and consequently that self-examination was a necessary prelude to the understanding of life as a whole:

Self-intuition and self-interpretation, when the self is regarded as a product of higher forces, similar to the other, and especially to the human products of the same, is indispensable to all true knowledge of man and men, and even of all other things, in that chief sense in which their essence is a reality analogous to us. The exploring of myself in this higher view is not a nourishing, but a correcting of vanity. Self is thus resolved into a result, an exponent, of laws, which it depends on, not commands - is valued for the sake of that which is above it, - is disindividualised, unisolated, rather universalised and idealised (58).

**This seems to be not only a defence of Romanticism but a defence too of modern contemporary sensibility against charges that subjectivity was analogous with sickness, and Sterling in fact distinguished between, on the one hand a large minded study of one's own nature as typical of man's nature in general, and on the other a narrow concern with one's own personality:**

**My consciousness is the window, the only possible one, through which I look at the universe.**

**However he thought that his individuality was:**

**...the looking glass always a small, often a cracked and dim one, that hangs on the inner wall of the same chamber. (59).**



## VI

The synthesis of a strongly motivated hero with the social structure occurs only if history is seen as progressive. Disraeli wanted to regenerate society which is an ambitious goal for a political novelist and politician, and one he ultimately failed to attain. Disraeli attempts in Sybil to understand the non-institutional aspects of the impulses toward reform such as vocation and benevolence. He used the Blue Books, Parliamentary debates on the Factory Acts, and drew on the example of Owenite communities as well as other novelists and social commentators for an historical and social background, and in the novel he tries to show their origin in the self, and their growth in the social medium. The particular history of Egremont and the briefer history of Aubrey St Lys are used to point out how the private self is interwoven with the public task.

However Disraeli's sense of the links between character, environment and belief are weak, and he failed to relate individual growth to social change. The novel does not explore the hero's development in relation to the growing social unrest, the Chartist movement and the initial causes of the movement. Egremont learns about Chartism and the "Two nations....THE RICH AND THE POOR [S p.77] in a dialogue of ideas with Walter Gerard and the Chartist Stephen Morley, but Disraeli fails to carry through the learning process. Egremont thus becomes "A kind of traveller; something in the way of your friend Morley - connected with the press", [S p.158], so that while he is sympathetic,

idealistic, and in tune with "the people" wanting to alleviate their suffering, he is merely a spectator describing and reporting conditions.

Carlyle's notion was that history embodied continuity as well as change. "Change", since the French Revolution, had appeared as a threatening reality, which accounted for the centrality of history in the nineteenth century. History demonstrated the possibility of giving order and meaning to events, so that not only were there no longer "meaningless" events, but there could be meaning only through events. In Past and Present (1843) he conceptualised the historical process for didactic ends, and from this work Disraeli borrowed the idea of history elucidating contemporary problems, finding political solutions in an idealised English past, rather than in contemporary social models. He settled on Carlyle's dictum that history revealed human interdependence and the impossibility of isolation. Like Carlyle too he used the symbol of the medieval abbey which is central to Past and Present to represent the organic society; Disraeli puts the argument that society's unity is fragmented by the "cash nexus" in to the mouth of Stephen Morley:

"As for community"...."with the monasteries expired the only type that we ever had in England of such an intercourse. There is no community in England; there is aggregation, but aggregation under circumstances which make it rather a dissociating than a uniting principle". [S p.75].

Carlyle was sceptical about the transforming power of revolution or legislation, and Disraeli too favoured peaceful co-operation. Sybil contains few prescriptive statements, and while the passage quoted can be seen as Disraeli advocating the superiority of co-operation over the pursuit of individual self-interest, the novel

itself fails to support this thesis. Wodgate or Wogate, a Black country

manufacturing town:

...has its enduring spell. Notwithstanding the spread of its civic prosperity, it has lost none of the characteristics of its original society; on the contrary it has zealously preserved them....No church there has yet raised its spire...Here Labour reigns supreme. Its division indeed is favoured by their manners, but the interference or influence of mere capital is instantly resisted.  
[S p.189].

But it is not only a proletarian community, but has rather the same failings as wider society, for the majority were in the grip of an unpleasant proletarian aristocracy. However, for Disraeli, the aristocracy embodied the concept of continuity of time and

....the aristocracy of Wodgate is by no means so unpopular as the aristocracy of most other places....In the first place, it is a real aristocracy; it is privileged, but it does something for its privileges. It is distinguished from the main body not merely by name. It is the most knowing class at Wodgate; it possesses indeed in its way complete knowledge; and it imparts in its manner a certain quantity of it to those whom it guides. Thus it is an aristocracy that leads, and therefore a fact. [S p.190].

The novel therefore urges the resumption of duties by the aristocracy; politics and religion were failing to interpret reality correctly - this is Egremont's vocation - and thus guide conduct.

Disraeli tries to reconcile notions of continuity and change. Towards the end of Sybil Dandy Mick is rewarded by Egremont for "all the dangers he had encountered" in serving Sybil and defending the rights of the people. Egremont has inherited the title of Lord Marney; his brother, having killed Walter Gerard, was himself killed by Gerard's indignant followers:

**Lord Marney established him in business, and Mick took Devilsdust for a partner. Devilsdust, having thus obtained a position in society, and become a capitalist, thought it but a due homage to the social decencies to assume a decorous appellation, and he called himself by the name of the town where he was born. The firm of Radley, Mowbray, and Co is a rising one; and will probably furnish in time a crop of members of Parliament and peers of the realm. [S p.489-490].**

**The continuity is represented by the aristocracy of which Egremont is now a fully educated member, and the change is to a certain extent a portion of social mobility for the lower classes, but under the patronage of the enlightened aristocracy. In this reconciliation then Disraeli sees the Ideal operating within the context of the real.**

## VII

Disraeli was not only far from revolution and democracy in Sybil, but also was not concerned with any really radical social change. St. Lys and Egremont are both motivated by a sense of responsibility to a higher personal goal, and by a drive for personal redemption. Egremont fails to undertake a total commitment towards his ambitious purpose. A major theme of the European "Bildungsroman" is failure, and ultimately in Egremont's case, it is the failure of his vocation with the inexcusable amateurishness of his political adventures.

In Daniel Deronda Deronda fulfils his vocation, once he has discovered he is Jewish, by firmly rooting himself in Jewish culture. But neither for Deronda nor Egremont is vocation universal - it originates, in Deronda's case from an ethnic, and in Egremont's case a social, partiality which is preserved; in both novels "assimilation" is rejected. In the end neither hero is interested in the public sphere with its conflicts, but in the erection of barriers. Walter Gerard's claim to the Mowbray estates, which Sybil inherits, worth "forty thousand a year", indicates that Disraeli did not countenance a true daughter of the people by upbringing, marrying a true aristocrat by nature. Egremont has, early in the narrative, discerned that Gerard's daughter was "not made for the common cares of life" [S p.157], but in the disclosure of Sybil as an heiress the novel degenerates into melodrama. Although at first Egremont is interested in the public sphere, the barriers are erected and the aristocracy and the people can not

be readily joined in matrimony. Both Deronda and Egremont are entrenched within sub-cultures and are impervious to the dynamics of the outside world.

In valuing a character's vocation the judgment can be based on his contribution to society, culture and history; in other words, on the basis of works which stand on their own. Conversely the valuation can be on the contribution to the moral life an individual makes to those closest to him and is mainly measured by the renunciation of self-interest involved, encompassing the values of family and community. Goethe solved the problem of the split between these two valuations, between "life" and "vocation" in the "Bildungsroman" through the aesthetic harmony of everyday life in which conflicting drives could be reconciled.

The autonomous individual of Contarini Fleming is not to be found in Sybil, and is not represented by Egremont. There is a contrary historical process in Sybil in that there is a sacrifice of individuality typical of the age of the mass movements such as Chartism; the unified image of the individual is dismantled and in the ideology of the Chartist movement the individual figured simply as part of the whole. There is no conflict with the world and Egremont's individuality is dissipated in his pseudo-Chartist activities, where he shares centre stage not only with Sybil and Walter Gerard but with Stephen Morley and St. Lys, and is subsumed by his withdrawal into his so-called station in life. His mobility across the whole of society is curtailed by his conformity with the expectations of the aristocracy to which he belongs; youth becomes in the narrowest sense "apprenticeship" to Egremont's original place to which he

returns. Disraeli was unable to portray the age of the masses, and Chartism in particular, through the lens of the "Bildungsroman"; the form which he used as the biography of a youthful individual as the most meaningful viewpoint to enable the reader to understand and evaluate history was inadequate for that task.

## VIII

Disraeli used the "condition of England" to give background to his attempt at a novel about a hero's vocation to regenerate society via the aristocracy, for Disraeli's message seems to be that any workers' movement, such as Chartism, is doomed to failure and that the leaders of the people must come from the aristocracy. In Coningsby he infused the novel with a shrewd air of modernity, including Carlyle's captains of industry as model paternalists. But in Sybil there is a motley paternalism of Disraeli's own creation, blending medievalism with modernism, mixing conventional thought of the time with his own idiosyncrasies. It is an unrealistic vision which, while masquerading as a plea for a revived paternalism, is a novel of a failed vocation which degenerates into melodrama.

Disraeli's concept of society in the early years of Victoria's reign is of the rich and the poor who were:

Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets. [S p.77].

The idea of the two nations is a revelation to Egremont and is the beginning of his acceptance of social responsibility as a member of the aristocracy. However Disraeli satirizes the hereditary basis of the class structure; Egremont's family origins were "more memorable than illustrious" as the founder had been "a confidential domestic of one of the favourites of Henry VIII" [S pp.10-11]. While he ridicules the nobility he still awards Sybil aristocratic status. His presentation



of the poor generally is ironic, and, in revealing Sybil as an aristocrat he demonstrates that there are in fact two kinds of poor people, the good ones, like Walter Gerard and Sybil, and the rest. So while the Gerards both seem, and are, noble, the mobs of mechanics and miners are not idealised and are used to shock his readers. (60).

However criticism of the social condition was useful politically.

Disraeli was not advocating a social policy in Sybil. Sybil is a novel of vocation, the vocation of a representative, again, of the social aristocracy which needed to be redeemed in order to fulfil its natural function. While Disraeli thought that the social happiness of the millions should be the first object of a statesman, in practical terms he promoted none of the conventional solutions in Sybil, whether radical reform of the church and state, despite his interest in religion, or education, or the more bizarre "emigration" advocated by Carlyle in Chartism or Mrs Gaskell in Mary Barton. There was no solution and no programme, but again the novel as criticism was a platform for him as a man of ideas which included the rule of the aristocracy and consequently class peace and co-operation. The same motive which leads to criticism at one moment, however, leads to silence at another, which is most clearly true of the ambition for political power. Disraeli's imagining himself as the leader of the next government meant that when he did indeed attain political power in March 1868, his attainment of power was in two senses the end of his criticism, firstly because the critic aims at the effectiveness that power makes possible, and secondly because, having attained power, he can no longer be critical of his own effects.

## **CHAPTER 4**

**Lothair as classical "Bildungsroman":  
the paradox of a novel of youth written  
with "the frame of age".**

The issues addressed in Sybil are not the primary basis for Disraeli's view of life, but rather are used as background in order to criticise the failure of the aristocracy to carry out its duties. While Sybil was critical of society it was not a novel about the solution of social problems.

Disraeli achieved his ambition of the premiership in March 1868 and wrote his penultimate novel, Lothair, in 1870, twenty five years after Sybil. Lothair covers the period from August 1866 to August 1868 and uses as background the forces at work under the surface of society, such as the secret societies, and the conflict between science and faith. It takes the form of a "Bildungsroman", but the paradox is that this novel of youth was written in old age. This could be accounted for precisely because Disraeli had achieved the Premiership in old age, which demonstrates the harmonious synthesis of the individual, in this case Disraeli, with society; its corollary, happiness, meant the end of criticism.

In his novels Disraeli moves from the ambitious and arrogant youth of his early heroes, Vivian Grey and Contarini Fleming through the character Coningsby imbibing wisdom from his mentor Sidonia, to Lothair characterised by Leslie Stephen as a youthful hero who 'reduces himself so completely to a mere "passive bucket" to be pumped into by every variety of teacher, that he is unpleasantly like a fool.' (1). Throughout his literary career Disraeli demonstrated that he loved ingenuous youth, but old age had shown him the value of being receptive to ideas and experience in the tradition of Goethe's character Wilhelm Meister. In Wilhelm

**Meister, Goethe saw youth as the most meaningful part of life, a necessary exploration, generating hope; this is the first gift Goethe's Faust is offered by Mephistopheles. Youth was symbolic of a world which was looking forward, rather than backward. Lothair reflected a certain historical perspective of Europe, a conception of change which prompted his inclusion of Roman Catholicism and Italian nationalism as symbolic of the conflict between religion and science.**

## **I**

**His novel Lothair was Disraeli's most successful use of the form of the classical "Bildungsroman". While he had clearly recognised that the individual had the right to construct his own personal destiny, in Lothair he also recognised that in choosing one's own ethical code and idea of happiness, self-determination is obviously in conflict with socialization. As a free individual and convinced citizen, the character must perceive social norms as being his own so that those norms must be internalised - the construction of personality cannot take place without society, and as the dominant aspect of the novel, society is also the determining element.**

**As Wilhelm Meister discovers early in his career:**

**After I had learnt something, it began to seem to me as if I knew nothing, and I was right: for I did not see the connection, and after all this is the whole point. [WM, I, 4, p.25].**

**Similarly Lothair confides to the Lady Corisande, whom he will marry, that her mother originally thought him to be an immature and undeveloped individual, when at the beginning of the novel he requested her daughter's hand:**

**...she treated me as a boy. She said I knew nothing of the world, and both our characters were unformed. I know the world now. I have committed many mistakes, doubtless many follies, have formed many opinions, and have changed many opinions. [L p.466].**

**In committing "many mistakes" which led to his changing "many opinions", Lothair admits that it is not enough to achieve an objective result, that of marrying Lady Corisande. Although he eventually does just this, meanwhile he has learned to**

direct his own life so that his sense of belonging to a wider community is strengthened. Life, then, is meaningful if the internal life of the individual is connected with the external world; self-development and social integration converge and synthesise in maturity.

As the examples of Disraeli's Contarini Fleming and Stendhal's Julien Sorel demonstrated, the meaning of life was achieved through conflict: neither was a paradigmatic character of the classical "Bildungsroman". Goethe himself discusses in the fifth book of Wilhelm Meister the difference between the novel and the drama:

The novel must move slowly, and the sentiments of the leading character must hold back, in whatever way this may be done, the forward movement of the whole towards its fulfilment....The novel hero must be passive, or at least not in a high degree active; effect and action are expected from the dramatic hero....In drama the hero does not model anything according to his own personality, everything resists him, and he either moves the obstacles out of his way or else is overcome by them. [WM, V, 7, p.94].

Certainty of meaning resided, as Hegel showed, in a participation of the Whole. Friedrich Schlegel writing "On Goethe's Meister" in 1798 identified the new type of novelistic hero:

His entire nature consists of feeling, willing, aspiring; and although we can foresee that he will come to act as a mature man only very late (or perhaps never), his easy adaptability is a sure promise that men and women will make his education their business and their pleasure. Perhaps without knowing or even wishing it, they will thereby stimulate in numerous ways that gentle, many-sided receptivity which gives his mind such great appeal; and they will develop his dim, early awareness of the whole world into a beautiful form. (2)

Lothair is characterised in terms of passivity and, unheroic, he does not establish qualities as a leader or a potential leader, lamenting 'I often think...that I have neither powers nor talents' [L p.289]. Frederic Harrison reviewing Lothair in the Fortnightly Review in June 1870 thought it a 'political event' when a prime minister created a character such as the "goose Lothair":

When a man whose life has been passed in Parliament, who for a generation has been the real head of a great party, sits down, as he approaches the age of seventy, to embody his view of modern life, it is a matter of interest to the politician, the historian, nay almost the philosopher....the mature thoughts on life of one who has governed an empire on which the sun never sets, have an inner meaning to the thoughtful mind. (3)

As a character Lothair is closely related to Wilhelm Meister, being impressionable, sensitive and ambivalent. In trying to know himself, and acquaint himself with his own nature, Disraeli is passing on the benefits of an education for life.

Goethe, in Wilhelm Meister, indicated that creative self-cultivation of the imaginative reader is essentially similar to a poet's work, insisting that criticism itself, which was the product of reading, must help readers to see in what way the novel is attempting to engage them in educating and improving themselves through self-criticism. Friedrich Schlegel in Critical Fragments had insisted that the reader should be alive and critical, not "calm and dead". Through the novel the reader can share the experience and discover for himself the truth to which the author refers him (4). Fragment and dialogue forms point to the incompleteness of all works of art. Man's experience of life too is not complete, but art is a stimulus to attain completeness, even if this is impossible. Art provides the starting point for this goal of completion which can be aided by self-knowledge and self-cultivation; Wilhelm

Meister was, for the Romantics, a supreme example of the Romantic work of art, partly because even its overt content is the process of a young man cultivating and educating himself while, indirectly, the novel itself reveals a cultivated mind. For both reader and writer an ability to achieve a state of detachment is necessary, and Schlegel attributed an ironic attitude to Goethe whom he thought seemed "to smile down from the heights of his intellect upon his work" (5). Self-criticism would seem to be the goal of detached reflectiveness, and the capacity for self-criticism and self-consciousness is connected with the ability to stand back in order to enjoy a parody of oneself, precisely because of one's limitations which have not been overcome. Contarini Fleming was a self-conscious novel because Disraeli was creating an identity, while Lothair was written in retrospect. The point of history is that there is a known conclusion to an event, and Disraeli was able to exercise a synoptic view of his own career at that point. So that when he wrote Lothair he had a sense of having failed, despite the opinion offered by New Monthly Magazine that "He has realised the dream of his youthful ambition; he has been Prime Minister of Great Britain". The reviewer goes on to express the following view:

...it would not be unreasonable to suppose that he might look back to the time when he amused the world with his sparkling romances as to a period of his life which had had its own special ends and uses, but which had passed away for ever. (6)

It was in Endymion, his last novel written in 1880 that the character Myra, sister of the hero observes that she cannot imagine "a position more unfortunate than that of an exiled prince", while Lord Roehampton replies that in his opinion it was "To have the feelings of youth and the frame of age". [E p.193]. Disraeli became Prime Minister after having written Lothair, and for a relatively



long period, from February 1874 to 1880 when he was defeated in the April General Election and resigned, by which time he had recognised his failure:

Power! It has come to me too late. There were days when, on waking, I felt I could move dynasties and governments; but that has passed away.  
(7)

He had actually expressed this thought after the Congress of Berlin (1878), but it can be compared with a passage in Contarini Fleming written in 1832 when Fleming achieves success at a European conference of statesman which prompts the thought: "In imagination I shook thrones and founded empires", [CF p.173 and see pp.62-63 above], when, it seems, Disraeli anticipated his own success. In Lothair, however, he ponders the question that it might be that 'the blunders of youth are preferable to the triumphs of manhood, or the successes of old age'. [L p.150]. The irony is that one can not attain an immediate object; gaining experience is a life-time's work, but action is feeble without the energy of youth.

Goethe too was aware of activity as the defining characteristic of mankind and that the accumulation of knowledge through successive experiences continues throughout life. He makes this quite explicit in his use of the Faust legend which was a lifelong challenge to him. In 1790 he published Faust, ein Fragment, which continued to be planned, written and revised until he died. In the encounter between Mephistopheles and Faust, Mephistopheles offers Faust full enjoyment of life in contrast to his scholarly pursuits, but Faust, declaring his disbelief that experience could ever be pleasurable requires the development of all his individual possibilities, so that eventually, through the pursuit of knowledge he will come to know and thus dominate the world. Goethe's image of man is one of pursuing goals

**which change and recede so that the pursuit is the goal and man is defined by action and movement.**

## II

Contarini Fleming addressed the problem of the influence of childhood on the moral and psychological needs of Disraeli's hero, and in Lothair the orphan motif shapes its structure. As with Wilhelm Meister too, Lothair is concerned with the influence of childhood on the protagonist. Lothair has an improbably secluded upbringing, and the orphan hero as rich grandee enters the world an innocent. He is an outsider, despite his membership of the aristocracy; partly because of the cold and malign influence of his Scottish Presbyterian uncle Lord Culloden who is both rigid and humourless, and partly because Disraeli considered himself an "outsider" despite his Jewish birth which he considered gave him membership of the aristocracy of race (8). Lady Jerome observes that she hears that "he has been terribly neglected, brought up among the most dreadful people, entirely infidels and fanatics...; you, my Lord Cardinal, you must interfere...; you must save him, and if he is so ingenuous, it seems impossible that he can resist the truth" [L p.41].

When the novel begins Lothair is supremely confident. Asking for Lady Corisande's hand in marriage he remarks to her mother, the Duchess that his "opinions are already formed on every subject; that is to say, every subject of importance; and, what is more, they will never change" [L p.13]. However his request is rejected on grounds of immaturity and he is offered the advice that perhaps "some experience of society" before he commits himself would not be inappropriate. Lothair observes that he has "no wish to enter the world" and that

he "hates society" [L p.14]. He mistakes the Duchess's meaning in her use of the word "society" which she corrects:

...I did not mean merely going to parties for society; I meant knowledge of the world, and that experience which enable us to form sound opinions on the affairs of life. [L p.15]

Lothair is bland and complacent intellectually, with his mind already made up about what he needs to "complete" his life:

....there is that to which I really wish to devote my existence, and in which I instinctively feel Lady Corisande would sympathise with me, the extinction of pauperism. [L p.15]

The novel shows Lothair to be on a quest; not for religion as such, (although this was the view of the reviewer in Macmillan's Magazine in 1870 (9)), but for an education and a philosophy of life which involves confronting both religious views and political action. In order to gain this, in the words of Schlegel writing "On Goethe's Meister", Lothair like Meister will have to be able to learn wherever he is:

...he will not be without his trials and temptations. But if a kindly destiny or a friend with a wide scope of experience supports him with good will, guiding him with warnings and promises, then his years of apprenticeship cannot but end happily. (10)

A pliant character is required, and Disraeli offers one in Lothair: events take place around Lothair, not because of him; he leaves to others the not inconsiderable task of shaping his life.

After the initial period of self-confidence Lothair enters a second phase, one of self-doubt, and consequently undergoes a period of experience and trial.

Experience implies growth, expansion of self and in this passive middle-ground which Lothair inhabits he is surrounded by characters who err in opposite directions. However the characters of his second guardian Grandison, and the women Lady Corisande, Clare Arundel, Theodora Campian, and even the extraordinary Mr Phoebus are interesting not for their autonomous existence, but for their effect on Lothair.

Lothair displays a lack of decisiveness once he has observed that all his ideas "are formed on every subject". While he vacillates, but does not cut himself off from Lady Corisande and the Brentham circle, he entangles himself in a Roman Catholic network, lays aside his plans for a cathedral and becomes preoccupied with Theodora Campian.

It is simplistic to see Lothair as an anti-Catholic novel, although the setting is at the time of the conversion of the Marquess of Bute to Catholicism (11). This event increased anxiety in society about the state of the Anglican Church and the exodus to Rome. Because religious diversity was thought to be a cause of both doubt and conflict with the common people, the Anglican Church was a common denominator defining political order. For example Abraham Hayward emphasized an anti-Catholic stance when reviewing Lothair in Macmillan's Magazine in June 1870:

He prides himself on having written the Jews into fashion; he now threatens to write the High Church Ritualists and English Romanists out.  
(12)

**The Quarterly Review of July 1870 went further and observed that:**

**It may be very instructive to our golden youth to be warned against the machinations of Rome; but to effect this purpose, it was hardly worth the while of the leader of a great political party in the State to write a book which has been as sour grapes to the teeth of all the Roman Catholics in the land...it is a great mistake in a statesman like Mr Disraeli to deride them in a book which he calls a novel... (13)**

**Disraeli does deal with religious philosophies which can be said to be broadly represented by the three female characters: Lady Corisande representing a combination of English aristocracy and the Anglican Church, Clare Arundel the Romantic tradition and the Roman Catholic Church, and Theodora Campian, free thought and popular democracy.**

**All aspects of the religions, however, are treated with respect. While Corisande may be said to be both bland and unoriginal, (rather similar to the 'Tory principle' which she symbolizes), she is also conventional, dutiful and acts with decency. Clare Arundel has integrity, and any criticism of the Catholic Church is directed at Cardinal Grandison (14). Theodora Campian is presented in an enthusiastic and fervent way, and indeed her free thought was representative of the secret revolutionary societies throughout Europe, although she is not a sectarian. As she remarks to Lothair, she has religion in that she worships "in a church where I believe God dwells, and dwells for my guidance and my good: my conscience" [L p.157].**

Theodora's influence is vital in Lothair's quest for himself, for he never rejects her ideology, but assimilates it into the more satisfactory ethos of a broad Christian belief. She fears, however, that he is too impressionable:

I know your nature; it is gentle and brave, but perhaps too susceptible. I wished it to be susceptible of the great and good. [L p.304].

Lothair undergoes his "trial" in marching to Mentana with the redshirts, encouraged by Theodora, and it is her death there which leads him to the experience of grief:

He had become acquainted with sorrow; he had experienced calamities physical and moral...It was that first great grief which makes a man acquainted with his deepest feelings, which detracts something from the buoyancy of the youngest life, and dims, to a certain degree, the lustre of existence. But even that bereavement was mitigated by distractions alike inevitable and ennobling. [L p.352]

His Italian experience is not an obstacle to be overcome, but an opportunity to be incorporated into the experiences of life, and thus build a personality.

In acquiring experience however, Disraeli warned, like Goethe in Wilhelm Meister, that it must not come perilously close to abstract ideas and move too far away from life. In Book Five, Wilhelm Meister reflects on his lack of experience:

...he had had sufficient opportunity to notice that he lacked experience, and for that reason he placed an excessive value on the experiences of others and on the consequences which they derived from them with conviction, and because of this he only went even further astray. He believed that he could acquire what he lacked in the first place if he attempted to return and collect everything memorable that he might encounter in books and conversation. He therefore wrote down the opinions and ideas of others as well as of himself, indeed whole conversations which interested him, and in this way unfortunately held on to what was false as well as what was true, clinging far too long to one idea, indeed, it might be said, to one maxim, and in the process he moved away from his natural manner of thinking and acting, as he often followed alien lights as his guiding stars. [WM, V, 1, p.75].

**Lothair is submissive, and in being captivated by Theodora, is emotionally under her influence, but he begins to understand the problems of apotheosizing one's conscience when he replies to Theodora's argument that the "true religion" is her conscience:**

**"Your conscience may be divine", said Lothair,  
"and I believe it is; but the consciences of other persons are not divine,  
and what is to guide them, and what is to prevent or to mitigate the evil  
they would perpetrate?" [L p.157]**

**The stress on "conscience" can be seen as a Protestant preoccupation associated with the Lutheran questioning of religious dogma. One of the Catholic arguments during the Reformation was the contention that Luther's criterion of subjective certainty - the compulsion of one's conscience - would lead to religious anarchy and everybody would appeal to his or her own conscience. Theodora is not a sectarian and it is precisely the dogmatism of organised religion to which she objects. However, while she is a "free-thinking" person associated with Continental revolutionary societies, she is also what many people will concede to be a "religious person".**

**It is Mr Phoebus who illustrates moral secularism. Disraeli shows him as representative of the bankruptcy of erecting one's own preferences into values, and of raising sybaritic behaviour to a theoretical level. Theodora's anti-clericalism is adopted by Phoebus (15) to his own ends on his Aegean island with its "Aryan clime, an Aryan landscape and an Aryan race" [L p.371]. He lives an "instinctive" life as a Hellenist pursuing "a life in his island partly feudal, partly oriental, partly Venetian, and partly idiosyncratic" which he shares with his wife and her sister Euphrosyne. They have:**



**...a great love and knowledge both of art and nature, and insensibly they weaned Lothair from that habit of introspection which, though natural to him, he had too much indulged. [L pp.371 and 376].**

**Phoebus looks upon the Aegean celebrations as religious ceremonies and while supposedly atheist (he thought that "true religion is the worship of the beautiful" [L p.373]) he creates an altar in the form of a statue of Theodora on his Greek island. While wanting to perpetuate classical ideas, educating the body as well as the mind, he abandons Greece to paint the Holy Land for a member of the Russian nobility. Phoebus thus contradicts his own definition of virtue which is "the control of the passions, in the sentiment of repose, and the avoidance in all things of excess" [L p.373]. Phoebus seems to subvert Christian theology, and it is in this area which Disraeli sees that, rather like Spinoza, he is a destroyer of established religion and morality. Goethe admired Spinoza's philosophy, which has been interpreted both as scientific rationalism, particularly by George Eliot, and as a mystical sense of the unity of Nature. In referring to Goethe as a "Spinozist" in the novel [L p.396] Disraeli appears to object to the dispassionate reason displayed in Spinoza's work. Although the Ethics contains a survey of the powers and passions of men he attaches no importance to aesthetic experience in the scheme of human development, and this is just one symptom of Spinoza's general detachment from Mediterranean influence so important to Disraeli. However in the Ethics Spinoza argues that:**

**...a man who is submissive to his emotions does not have power over himself, but is in the hands of fortune to such an extent that he is often constrained, although he may see what is better for him, to follow what is worse... (16)**

Disraeli too holds that "the control of the passions" is virtuous, and we can extrapolate that the actions of Phoebus indicate that Disraeli sees him in need of religion and spirituality.

In Culture and Anarchy, Matthew Arnold in 1869 complained that religions teach humans to subdue only animality:

Nothing is more common than for people to confound the inward peace and satisfaction which follows the subduing of the obvious faults of our animality with what I may call absolute inward peace and satisfaction, - the peace and satisfaction which are reached as we draw near to complete spiritual perfection, and not merely moral perfection...But men of culture and poetry, it will be said, are again and again failing, and failing conspicuously, in the necessary first stage to a harmonious perfection, in the subduing of the great obvious faults of our animality, which it is the glory of these religious organisations to have helped us to subdue...They have often failed in morality, and morality is indispensable. (17)

One year after this was written we can see that Disraeli wants to show that Phoebus's classicism seems immoral; he advocates aesthetic values, not moral ideas, as the basis of civilization. Arnold indicted religious institutions, arguing that British culture lacked "sweetness and light", and saw that although he allowed "the aristocratic class to possess sweetness", they were "inaccessible to ideas" and "somewhat wanting in light".

One has often wondered whether upon the whole earth there is anything so unintelligent, so unapt to perceive how the world is really going, as an ordinary young Englishman of our upper class. Ideas he has not... (18)

According to Disraeli, however, the aristocracy had potential for enlightenment and he proposed quite the reverse. Lothair is gradually exposed to experiences which would help him to perceive that if the Anglican Church was embraced by the aristocracy, they would lead the way forward towards perfection of mind and spirit.

**In any event, this way lay order, and in Arnold's words: without order there can be no society, and without society there can be no human perfection" (19).**

**It was Spinoza's contention that:**

**...perfection and imperfection are in truth only modes of thinking, namely notions, which we are wont to invest owing to the fact that we compare with each other individuals of the same species or genus. (20)**

**Disraeli's position was that England's property holders had lost a sense of duty to uphold the institutions of Monarchy, Church and Parliament, which did not depend so much on culture as Arnold held. Spinoza's position was that if man ceased to be subject to the passions, he could be genuinely free, and such freedom consists in activity, particularly understanding; that is the understanding that one is part of an infinite substance, and we cannot exist in isolation from it.**

### **III**

**Writers as diverse as Carlyle, Cardinal Newman and George Eliot all saw abstractions as barren, and thought wisdom was only to be found in practice. As early as 1835 Disraeli had argued in The Vindication of the English Constitution that one should "Eschew abstractions" and "remember instead how entirely the result of a principle depends upon its method of application". He argued against the new school of statesman whose "great object" was to form political institutions on "abstract principles of theoretic science", instead of allowing them to evolve from the "course of events" and to be "naturally created by the necessities of nations". This scheme, he thought had originated in "the fallacy of supposing that theories produced circumstances, whereas the very converse of the proposition is correct, and circumstances indeed produce theories" (21).**

**Disraeli, thirty five years later, carried this idea through in Lothair. At the beginning of the novel his hero had already come to "one conclusion" which "was indubitable: life must be religion" [L p.70]. However after the experience in the "university" of life, he appreciated at the end of the novel that he had started in life with an "extravagant" notion of the influence of religion on the conduct of human affairs. In the General Preface to his collected novels he had written in 1870 a few months after the publication of Lothair about abstract theory and practice:**

**What has mainly led to this confusion of public thought and this uneasiness of society is our habitual carelessness in not distinguishing between the excellence of a principle and its injurious or obsolete application. [VG p.xi]**

For example Disraeli had begun satirizing Benthamite social reform as early as 1828 in his novel Popanilla, and the Young England group revived the mythical benevolence of the feudal system to oppose radical, centralizing Benthamism. Disillusionment with Benthamite and other theories of social reform grew in the 1830s and 1840s, and such manifestly topical authors as Dickens and Carlyle reinforced this disillusion. Like Disraeli they were advocates of social reform but in opposition to the Benthamites, believed that moral reform had to come first. Dickens advocacy of reform through fiction was made quite explicit in Hard Times (1854) with its indictment of utilitarianism and the factory system. His central antithesis is that of fact and fancy, real and unreal and against his critics Dickens defended the "fanciful" in his work. Against the facts of Coketown reducing people to objects Dickens does not offer better "facts" or a better political economy but opposes the "facts" of Gradgrind's utilitarianism with "fancy", in the form of Sleary's circus, an imaginative counter to political economy.

The imagination is an important theme running through both Disraeli's political life and through his fiction. But it would be inaccurate to state that facts were irrelevant, and as he began to write his penultimate novel, this becomes quite clear:

Between his lawyers, and his monsignores, and his architects, Lothair began to get a little harassed. He was disturbed in his own mind, too, on greater matters, and seemed to feel every day that it was more necessary to take a decided step, and more impossible to decide upon what it should be. He frequently saw the Cardinal, who was very kind to him, but who had become more reserved on religious subjects. He had dined more than once with his Eminence, and had met some distinguished prelates and some of his fellow nobles who had been weaned from the errors of their

cradle. The Cardinal perhaps thought that the presence of these eminent converts would facilitate the progress, perhaps the decision, of his ward; but something seemed always to happen to divert Lothair in his course. [L p.90]

Lothair needs guidance, and the novel itself does not demonstrate Disraeli's wholehearted faith in the imagination which he formerly displayed and had prompted Sidonia's declaration in Coningsby:

Man is only truly great when he acts from the passions; never irresistible but when he appeals to the imagination. [C p.253]

When Contarini Fleming aspired to political leadership Disraeli made it quite clear that aspiring leaders become such through the magnetic force of their imaginations. Disraeli had claimed in his General Preface that his motive in writing his earlier novels was to recognise "imagination in the government of nations as a quality not less important than reason" [VG p.x]. He had written in Coningsby that it was:

...the personal that interests mankind...A cause is a great abstraction and fit only for students; embodied in a party, it stirs men to action; but place at the head of that party a leader who can inspire enthusiasm, he commands the world. [C p.112].

However a reaction against the excesses of Romanticism is detectable in Lothair, and while the colour and energy are still there, the supremacy and glorification of the individual, evident in Contarini Fleming is replaced with an emphasis on communal, philanthropic and domestic values. Though perhaps he writes the novel in despair that society would ever regenerate itself, nonetheless Disraeli seemed to hope that a call for self-renunciation and a re-direction of the individual's energies into social causes would be heeded. This is also the theme of George Eliot's Middlemarch which was published, just after the appearance of Lothair in 1871-72.

Eliot's heroine Dorothea Brooke's acts of "imaginative sympathy" towards Dr Lydgate in divining his matrimonial problems, and understanding his loss of reputation because of his connection with Bulstrode, enables Lydgate to accept "his narrowed lot with sad resignation" [M p.858]. For both Lothair and Dorothea love and duty coincide in marriage; for Lothair in his eventual marriage to Lady Corisande, for Dorothea in her happy second marriage, enabling each to act beneficently towards others. Spinoza's assertion that we are in bondage in proportion with external causes is in effect, akin to Plato and Socrates in that all wrong action is due to intellectual error; the man who understands his own circumstances adequately will act wisely and can even be happy in what could seem to be misfortune. Spinoza held however that it is self-preservation which governs behaviour as "the basis of virtue is the endeavour to preserve one's own being, and that happiness consists in this, that a man is able to preserve his own being". (22). Although the goal of self-seeking is different from that of the ordinary egoist because understanding:

...is the absolute virtue of the mind. But the greatest thing that the mind can understand is God...Therefore the greatest virtue of the mind is to understand or know God. (23)

Dorothea undergoes a Spinozan education, throughout Middlemarch, in the extension of her sympathies, commencing with disillusionment with her first marriage to Casaubon and ending in clarity of perception about her relation to others and society.

Lothair slowly becomes conscious of wasted energy and degrading occupation. He explains to his aristocratic friend Bertram that he, Lothair, has

**"come into everything ready-made", which he begins to think is "very unfortunate".**

**Bertram responds with a simple solution to Lothair's problem:**

**What are you going to do with yourself to-day? If you be disengaged, I vote we dine together at White's, and then we will go down to the House. I will take you to the smoking-room and introduce you to Bright, and we will trot him out on primogeniture. [L p.91].**

**Lothair seeks action which is effective, and he participates in the revolution in Italy both in order to avoid isolation and to clear his mind. He gradually perceives his relation to others in society by his various attempts at philanthropy. Disraeli sees imagination as the key to moral action. Self-interest is unavoidably man's motivating force, but through education in life and reflection on the fact that if one is of supreme interest to oneself, others are, by definition of supreme interest to themselves, altruistic acts can take place. Spinoza's view was that:**

**...men who, under the guidance of reason, seek what is useful to them, desire nothing for themselves which they do not also desire for the rest of mankind, and therefore they are just, faithful, and honourable. (24).**

**The ideas expressed in Lothair have moved and matured from those Disraeli expressed thirty five years previously in his Vindication of the English Constitution with its assault on the Utilitarians.**

**The same inventive sages who have founded all practical science of UTILITY have founded all moral science on SELF INTEREST, and have then declared that a system of government should be deduced alone from the principles of human nature...If every motive, that can possibly influence man, be included in self-interest, then it is impossible to form a science on a principle, which includes the most contrary motive. If the Utilitarians will not admit all the motives, but only some of the motives, then their science of government is not founded on human nature, but only on a part of human nature, and must be consequently and proportionally imperfect. (25)**



Although Disraeli's experiences of life and government made him more circumspect, they tended to confirm these youthful pronouncements and Lothair learns through trial and error that self-interest needs to be balanced by the interests of others:

"...everybody has sorrows and cares", said Lady Corisande; "you have, however, a great many things which ought to make you happy".

"I do not deserve to be happy", said Lothair, "for I have made so many mistakes. My only consolation is that one great error which you most deprecated I have escaped".

"Take a brighter and a nobler view of your life", said Lady Corisande; "feel rather you have been tried and not found wanting". [L pp.421-422].

The Ethics of Spinoza ends with the words:

For how could it be that if salvation were close at hand and could be found without difficulty it should be neglected by almost all? But all excellent things are as difficult as they are rare. (26)

This is echoed by Disraeli at the end of Chapter thirty one where his aim in developing his hero is stated when Lothair comments that "I perceive that life is not so simple an affair as I once supposed" [L p.157].

In Middlemarch Dorothea Brooke's sympathy has a "saving influence" on Lydgate. The chief distinction of the moral system of Spinoza, whose Ethics Eliot translated, was to embrace determinism while showing the possibility of moral sympathy and social duty. This Darwinian notion of the organism/individual determined by its medium is applied in Middlemarch, where it is possible for the individual, Dorothea, to make changes in the medium, that is the provincial society of Middlemarch. An ability to live in sympathetic association and not individualistic competition informs Disraeli's belief in the aristocratic settlement of the country.

**But for Disraeli the virtue of a united landed and industrial aristocracy of talent sympathetic to and leading the rural and urban workers to see their welfare as of mutual interest was not a Darwinian notion. In the Vindication of the English Constitution (1835), Disraeli had maintained that the English constitution rests on the primary assumption that property entails duties. He held that it was this principle that persisted through change and gave continuity and direction to social progress. But Lothair like Dorothea strives to reach a "higher" form of life which in Spinozan terms is the language of "clear ideas", "reflection", "pitying fellowship" and "energy". Philanthropic acts are brought about by a necessary self-interest wrought into moral action by imaginative sympathy.**

#### IV

Lothair is inspired by the enthusiasm of the Catholic Clare Arundel who informs him that if she had the wealth she would buy up some of the squalid streets in Westminster and build a cathedral where the worship of God could be presented as gloriously as in Rome:

Lothair found himself frequently in a reverie over Miss Arundel's ideal fane; and feeling that he had the power of buying up a district in forlorn Westminster, and raising there a temple to the living God, which might influence the future welfare of millions, and even effect the salvation of his country, he began to ask himself, whether he could incur the responsibility of shrinking from the fulfilment of this great duty. [L p.62]

He is encouraged in this by the Cardinal who informs him that the "highest duty" of man is to defend the principles of religion "without which the world must soon become a scene of universal desolation" [L p.67]. Lothair's idea of "duty" is to influence the aesthetic sense of the masses that they might be quelled: "Lothair could not have a better adviser on the subject of the influence of architecture on religion than Monsignore Catesby" [L p.62]. Catesby (27) has been, significantly, a "pupil of Pugin" the Victorian architect who became a Roman Catholic in 1833 and who has been credited with the ability to conjure up the Catholic Middle Ages and "give form to the highest dreams of Catholic Romanticism" (28).

In inspiring Lothair, Clare Arundel has the function of Lothario in Goethe's Wilhelm Meister in that they both help the hero to find a feasible outlet for their essential need of expressing themselves through a duty to others. Lothario is

dedicated to the development of human potential through innovative community leadership. He intends to renounce many of his privileges as a feudal landlord so that his tenants and workers can be given their due share of increased yields he will achieve through new methods of agriculture [WM VII, 3, pp.14-15] (29). In the first pages of Middlemarch, Dorothea Brooke is preoccupied with drawing up plans for a series of model labourers' cottages; her view is that the lives of the labourers and those of their families would be happier if they were well housed, enabling them to carry out their duties the landlords expect of them. Succeeding to Casaubon's estate she is disappointed to find that the poor of Lowick are not only clean but well taken care of and there is no room for her ministrations. On Casaubon's death she is concerned to spend her life as philanthropist and plans an entire colony:

I should like to take a great deal of land, and drain it, and make a little colony, where everybody should work and all the work should be done well. I should know every one of the people and be their friend. [M p.594].

Dorothea is typical of one of George Eliot's protagonists trying to break free from egoism into a life of sympathy with their fellow human beings. She longs to escape by doing good and espousing a cause. This reforming passion could be seen as partly egoistic, and certainly this is true of Lothair at the beginning of the novel, prior to his "journey" of self discovery. He thinks that "pauperism" is "the terror of Europe, and the disgrace of Britain", with which he is "resolved to grapple". He enlarges on this resolve:

It seems to me that pauperism is not an affair so much of wages as of dwellings. If the working classes were properly lodged, at their present rate of wages, they could be richer. They would be healthier and happier at the same cost. I am so convinced of this, that the moment I am master I shall build 2000 cottages on my estates. I have the designs all ready. [ L pp.15-16].

Both Lothair and Dorothea Brooke's fantasies of good works towards the poor are entangled with the self, serving as a vehicle for their own redemption, and consequently there is a need to separate out their private need from the public task of ministering to the poor. This is made quite evident by Lothair:

I am wearied of hearing of my wealth, and am conscious it has never brought me any happiness. I have lived a great deal alone, dearest Duchess, and thought much of these things, but I feel now I should be hardly equal to the effort, unless I had a happy home to fall back upon. [L p.16].

It is, however, difficult to reconcile Lothair's vision of providing for the poor in a type of egalitarian society, with a desire to maintain some sort of paternalistic control, having set up and financed the whole project. If the poor are able to look after themselves the entire notion of paternalism is undermined. The paternalism is exposed in that both Dorothea and Lothair have plans, thus removing the project to the future. Therefore the paternalism is acted out at a distance with the rider that if necessary they need never be affected by their generosity, but they can attain salvation in their own minds without giving up anything that really counts.

In reacting against the excesses of Romanticism, Disraeli was in effect arguing in Lothair that a complete submission to the given world and the cult of absolute freedom for the self ignores an essential mixture of necessity and freedom in the self and the external world alike. Things and circumstances amenable to creative transformation exist in the external world intermingled with the unchangeable, just as in the self there are distinctive and necessary elements of a personality together with elements not part of such an individual essential nature. In order to establish a true self, a correct perception of what is necessary, both in

the given self and the given world is required. Therefore Lothair embarks on a life which is a chronicle of errors, producing not only disillusionment, but confusion and bewilderment which can approach despair, but errors which are in keeping with the discovery of his true self. This is in line with an important tradition of the novel itself from Don Quixote, through Madame Bovary to Dostoevsky. One of Flaubert's strongest beliefs was that happiness consists in anticipation and not realization. In his novel Sentimental Education Frédéric Moreau, the young man who falls in love with Madame Arnoux at the beginning is filled with dreams and aspirations; gradually Flaubert destroys each and every one of these until at the end there is no future, only the memories of a past moment of happiness before the "education" for life had begun. Frédéric Moreau and his friend Charles Deslauriers had fled the brothel, so they had not been disillusioned; fulfilment, Flaubert believed, cheapens aspiration. Thanks to inherited wealth Frédéric can protract his youth, but it is bound to end and his self-centred youth falls into benumbed old age; maturity is a void.

It has been argued that Romanticism was not necessarily self-centred, but directed towards public and social goals, and that the "Byronic" position of "self-assertion in an alien universe", the heroic model of "humanistic self-reliance" is a recent interpretation (30). The problem of Romantic alienation preoccupied Disraeli in Vivian Grey. Vivian Grey, a "dandy" in manner but Promethean in aspiration, embodied the two currents of Byronic alienation which Disraeli worked through in the 1830s and in 1837 in Venetia he posed the question whether or not the alienated Romantic hero could translate his ideals into effective social action. The Promethean

ambition in Vivian Grey failed to convince while Venetia, written ten years later shows more maturity. Vivian Grey's aspirations are not only banal, but the means used to achieve them vicious and selfish. The difference between Byron's hero and Disraeli's is that Byron justified rebelling against traditional spiritual and social values by indicating that he sought a higher self-fulfilment but never specified its exact nature. The reader could actively project his own aspirations on to the Byronic hero, rather than be in the role of a passive recipient of someone else's ambitions.

Disraeli's own ambition meant that Vivian Grey's aspirations to political power were very specific, purely selfish and not for the good of society. This first, autobiographical novel does not address the deeper meaning of the life of the hero, and the question is only what does the future hold for the hero; in contrast, selfish ambition is questioned in Venetia. Disraeli linked the Byronic heroic will of Plantagenet Cadurcis with Marmion Herbert, the Shelleyan figure's sympathetic imagination. From Shelley's A Defence of Poetry he quoted the famous "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" in reply to the assertion made by Cadurcis during a discussion between himself and Herbert that "What is poetry but a lie, and what are poets but liars?" [v p.455]. Because Shelley devoted much of his life to the issues of the day he illustrated how Romantic thought could recharge and reformulate radicalism. The Victorians considered Byron's conquest of self-will, which he displayed in his fight in the campaign for Greek Independence an example of humanistic self-denial. It is possible that Disraeli portrays Lothair espousing the cause of Italian nationalism in a Byronic way in order to demonstrate its failure as

a way of serving the public interest. The novel Lothair is perhaps Disraeli's attempt to show that the Romantic convictions which he had held all his life are possible ways of serving society as bulwarks against the socially corrosive forces of nihilism, Utilitarianism and materialism, but which he had failed to set in place because he had achieved power too late.



## V

Through his poetry and through his involvement with the nationalist movements of Italy and Greece, Byron represented a view of politics as exciting and colourful, even grand. Disraeli shared this attitude, which is clearly illustrated by the exaggerated influence he attributed to clandestine forces, especially secret societies, particularly in his biography of Lord George Bentinck.

Alone, the secret societies can disturb, but they cannot control, Europe. Acting in unison with a great popular movement they may destroy society, as they did at the end of the last century. (31)

As late as 1870 in Lothair Disraeli could still talk seriously of forces beneath the surface, and believe that secret societies and their international energies, the Church of Rome and the eternal conflict between science and faith were working to determine the course of human history. (32).

The "forces" of ideology were represented in Lothair by the movement for the liberation of Italy, and by the Roman Catholic Church, given that Catholicism encouraged a conformity which could degenerate into an attack on free thinking. Disraeli was unsympathetic to nationalism, seeing in it the influence of the secret society (33), although he wrote to Mrs Brydges Williams from Hughenden on September 16, 1860:

What an immense event is the Italian Revolution!...This is real history - and what an imbroglio. (34)

Disraeli came to associate liberal and national protest movements with anarchy and nihilism, regarding them as threats. His last fragment, which was the projected novel Falconet, featured a theological Buddhist from Ceylon in an international conspiracy to destroy the human race. It shows an obsession with nihilism in its relationship with acquiescent liberalism in England, which he thought could undermine the traditional institutions which preserve the rights of Englishmen. The traditional institutions of monarchy, church and aristocracy, as well as decentralized local government however, would prevent revolution, but were under attack from Gladstone and the Liberals. In his General Preface to his novels, Disraeli argued that the ideologies of Roman Catholicism and nationalism were undermining national institutions which "were the ramparts of the multitude against large estates exercising political power derived from a limited class" [VG, pp.ix-x]. Writing Lothair in 1870, the year before the Paris commune, Disraeli was able to say "it is the Church against the secret societies. They are the only two strong things in Europe, and will survive kings, emperors or parliaments" [L p.265]. It is not so much the effect these words had on his behaviour in government, but rather that he could write them feeling that they were acceptable. Indeed, they provide a focus for Lothair in his education for life, precisely because such ideas were commonly accepted by his contemporaries (35).

The "myth" of the secret society then provides Disraeli with background for the novel, and is seen as fundamental to the European political stage. A prelate tells Lothair that the secret societies for which he has been fighting:

**...have declared war against the Church, the State, and the domestic principle. All the great truths and laws on which the family reposes are denounced. Have you seen Garibaldi's letter? When it was read, and spoke of the religion of God being propagated throughout the world, there was a universal cry of "No, no! no religion!". But the religion of God was soon so explained as to allay all their fears. It is the religion of science. [L pp.144-145] (36)**

**Captain Bruges (37) one of the revolutionaries, talks of Mary-Anne, a legendary French secret society, saying that "There are more secret societies in France at this moment than at any period since '85, though you hear nothing of them" [L p.163]. Disraeli included a chapter which describes a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Holy Alliance of Peoples, which was an international society pledged to promote liberation movements throughout Europe. Before the adjournment of the Committee a toast was drunk "To MARY-ANNE", a name Disraeli chose for the French network of secret societies, which was not only the name of his wife, but that had also been mentioned in a Paris protocol in 1856. Mary-Anne societies were both founded and successfully encouraged to enthusiasm by a woman in 1862, the year of Garibaldi's unsuccessful attempt to march into Rome. Mary-Anne's role was to intimidate the French government, thus preventing its interference in Italian affairs. The identity of Theodora as Mary-Anne is put forward by Disraeli in the discussion between Monsignor Berwick and his "conspirator" companion:**

**MARY-ANNE, as you know, was the red name for the Republic years ago, and there always was a sort of myth that these societies had been founded by a woman. Of course that is all nonsense, but they keep it up; it affects the public imagination, and my government has undoubted evidence that the word of command has gone round to all these societies that Mary-Anne has returned and will issue her orders, which must be obeyed. [L p.264] (38).**

**The Roman Church is represented by Disraeli as a vigilant enemy of the secret societies, while the experience of Italian nationalism, personified by Theodora Campian, is shown quite deliberately as an important aspect of Lothair's education. Disraeli describes the dichotomy of Roman Catholicism versus the nationalist movement as offering an educational opportunity for Lothair. Theodora, who has the religion of "God in her conscience" is a vital influence in Lothair's process of finding himself. He assimilates her ideology into a broad Christian belief. It is ultimately towards the organised religion of Protestantism and to the Church of England that he turns, for it alone is able to accommodate such a broad view.**

**The Italian Revolution is equated with action, and action provides the antithesis of introspection, in which Lothair "was once so prone to indulge". His life takes on a different meaning with his involvement in the revolution which is seen as an "easy distraction from self-criticism" [L p.271]. The distractions are profusely supplied by:**

**...the startling affairs of which he formed a part, the singular characters with whom he was placed in contact, the risk and responsibility which seemed suddenly to have encompassed his with their ever-stimulating influence...  
[L p.271]**

**Theodora Campian's friend the Princess of Tivoli believes that action is the only "tolerable" thing in life and that unless it is accompanied by youth it is worthless. However, Lothair was able to "look forward to at least ten years of blunders: that is, illusions; that is, happiness. Fortunate young man" [L pp.150-151]. The revolution gives Lothair the experience of action which is in opposition to the obedience and reverence of Cardinal Grandison's doctrine of renunciation. Lothair**

experiences both, and at a subsequent meeting with the Princess Disraeli clarifies his aim:

"It seems to me now", said Lothair, "that I knew as much of life then as I did of the stars above us, about whose purposes and fortunes I used to puzzle myself."

To which the Princess replies:

"And might have remained in that ignorance. The great majority of men exist but do not live...you will accomplish your ends with a completeness which can only be secured by the culture and development you are now experiencing". [L p.289]

One aspect of this development is the perils to be encountered when exposed to conflicting ideologies. Lothair goes to the Colosseum to seek solace after realising that he has been "befooled by those whom he has trusted" [L p.346]. He has been the victim of a subtle plot to persuade him that he has been the subject of a miracle and that consequently it is his duty to be received into the Roman Catholic Church. But Theodora Campian's influence has a long reach, despite her death; she reminds him of his promise to avoid the Catholic faith. Lothair's decision to leave Rome is the result of a vision of her during his midnight walk in the colossal amphitheatre [L p.356], but "as he reached her, the figure melted into the moonlight, and she was gone: that divine Theodora, who, let us hope, returned at least to those Elysian fields she so well deserved." [L p.357]

This episode has similarities with one in Wilhelm Meister in which Wilhelm too is haunted by a vision:

The one female figure seemed to resemble that Amazon; an inexpressible pity seized our friend, he felt an irresistible need to ease his heartfelt emotions, tears welled to his eyes, and he could not recover before sleep overcame him.

Towards morning he was haunted by strange dreams. He was in a garden which he had often visited as a boy, and he was pleased to see once more the familiar avenues, hedges and flower-beds; he met Mariane, he talked affectionately to her and without recollection of any past misunderstanding...

...his father and Mariane seemed to be taking flight from him, he only ran the faster, and Wilhelm saw them gliding away down the avenue, almost flying. Instinct and inclination invited him to come to their help, but the Amazons hand held him back. How gladly he let himself be held! He awakened with this mixed feeling and found his room already illuminated by the bright sun. [WM, VII, I, pp.10-11].

Wilhelm's vision is of an unknown woman who is concerned about his plight when he is wounded, and it is a vision which continues throughout his convalescence. Later revealed as Natalie, the vision and Natalie are one and the same; differing only in one important respect:

...he occupied himself by comparing the picture of the Amazon with that of his new, present friend. They would not as yet completely converge; he had, as it were, created the former picture for himself, while the latter almost seemed to wish to remodel him. [WM, VIII, 2, p.83]

Lothair's experience is reversed in that Theodora has "remodelled" him and he, having almost recovered from injuries received in battle has himself recreated the former vision of her. Each protagonist has created an image, yet neither is at random. The power is derived from the distinctive yearnings of their individual natures, and combined with the real person who can meet (in the case of Wilhelm) or has met (in the case of Lothair) those yearnings. In both cases the protagonists sense that they themselves are about to be re-created, and are coming to a new understanding of themselves through the complete vision of embodied desire. This

**converging of images leaves both Lothair and Wilhelm Meister perplexed with no simple release for their confusion. In an attempt to achieve certainty and purpose by acquiring more experience of himself and the world Lothair is driven once more into action and heads for the "cradle" of faith, to the Holy Land while action for Wilhelm Meister consists in entering into a contract with Serlo and a proposal of marriage to Therese.**

## VI

Lothair, early in the novel, had attempted to discover what "faith" was from Cardinal Grandison, and was offered the view that faith existed in the Church. This prompted Lothair to link faith and religion with duty:

"It seems to me that a sense of duty is natural to man"...and that there can be no satisfaction in life without attempting to fulfil it".  
[L p.67]

Grandison expresses the idea, which is undoubtedly Disraeli's, that only religion can be a bulwark against revolution and anarchy. Perhaps this idea is influenced by Coleridge's On the Constitution of the Church and State (1830): "Religion, true or false, is and ever has been the centre of gravity in a realm, to which all other things must and will accommodate themselves". (39). The Cardinal argues that 'all the poetry and passion and sentiment of human nature are taking refuge in religion'. [L p.67], which accounts for Disraeli's interest in the colourful, symbolic and ritualistic aspects of Catholicism. When God is not present all things are permissible, because "Religion is civilisation". Religion is the "reclamation of man from savageness by the Almighty. What the world calls civilisation, as distinguished from religion, is a retrograde movement, and will ultimately lead us back to the barbarism from which we have escaped." [L p.249].

Matthew Arnold who also thought modern society was characterised by its fragmentation gave literature and criticism a central position in his total view of life. In his essay 'Maurice de Guérin' he considers that poetry is superior to prose,



being the true medium of the imagination. For him "The grand power of poetry" resided in its interpretative power":

...by which I mean, not a power of drawing out in black and white an explanation of the mystery of the universe, but the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them, and of our relations with them. (40).

In 'Maurice de Guérin' Arnold anticipates the argument in 'The Study of Poetry' that poetry will assume the function of religion precisely because it is the highest expression of which man is capable:

We should conceive of it as capable of higher uses, and called to higher destinies, than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto. More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. (41).

It is Cardinal Grandison too who expresses the view which Disraeli had all his life that the rise of science had aided materialism and atheism:

"The world is devoted to physical science, because it believes these discoveries will increase its capacity of luxury and self-indulgence. But the pursuit of science leads only to the insoluble".  
[L p.67]

It was significant that 1870, the year of Lothair's composition, was only eleven years since Darwin's Origin of the Species had seemed to bring science into conflict with religion. As the defender of the Church, his speech in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford on 25 November, 1864 had ridiculed the evolutionists and the incapacity of science to replace religion:

The discoveries of science are not, we are told, consistent with the teachings of the Church...It is of great importance, when this tattle about science is mentioned, that we should annex to the phrase precise ideas. I hold that the function of science is the interpretation of nature, and the

interpretation of the highest nature is the highest science. What is the highest nature? Man is the highest nature. But I must say that when I compare the interpretation of the highest nature by the most advanced, the most fashionable and modish, school of modern science with some other teachings with which we are familiar, I am not prepared to say that the lecture-room is more scientific than the Church.

What is the question now placed before society with a glib assurance the most astounding? The question is this - Is man an ape or an angel? My Lord, I am on the side of the angels. (42).

Disraeli's opposition to Darwin is also clearly expressed in the observation that "Instead of Adam, our ancestry is traced to the most grotesque of creatures," [L p.145] in an exchange Lothair has with the Monsignore. However, Disraeli had been expressing his views on the decline of the role of religion and the worship of science and the rise of "mechanical" society since his attack on Utilitarianism in Popanilla in 1828 and his inclusion of a Benthamite author in The Young Duke published in 1831. This character not only abhors aristocrats but mountains too, although:

Rivers he rather patronised; but flowers he quite pulled to pieces, and proved them to be the most useless of existences. Duncan Macmorragh informed us that we were quite wrong in supposing ourselves to be the miracle of Creation. On the contrary, he avowed that already there were various pieces of machinery of far more importance than man; and he had no doubt, in time, that a superior race would arise, got by a steam-engine on a spinning-jenny. [YD p.321].

Disraeli's rebuttal of Utilitarianism in The Young Duke is that Benthamite legislation is not as effective as the duke at the end of the novel, whose redemption arises from his feudal determination to take seriously his aristocratic duties of looking after the people.

In Lothair the Syrian Christian mystic Paraclete is the focal point of the opposition between science and religion, and it is the dialogue with him which is crucial in the later development of Lothair's character. Paraclete adopts the role of mentor, comparable with Sidonia in Coningsby, Winter in Contarini Fleming and Jarno in Wilhelm Meister, where the interaction of mentor with pupil results in a combination of new impressions, both external and internal and causes the pupil to reassess his ideas about his future.

Paraclete denies Mr Phoebus's standards of Pantheism in his talk with Lothair on the Mount of Olives in which Lothair voices his wish to visit the "cradle" of his faith:

"There are some things I know, and some things I believe", said the Syrian. "I know that I have a soul, and I believe that it is immortal".

"It is science that by demonstrating the insignificance of this globe in the vast scale of creation has led to this infidelity", said Lothair.

"Science may prove the insignificance of this globe in the scale of creation", said the Syrian, "but it cannot prove the insignificance of man".  
[L p.394]

Lothair informs Paraclete that there are people who deny creation, and consequently that there could be no creation. He continues that he wished he could assure himself of "the personality of the Creator", which he clings to, but thinks unphilosophical. This evokes the response that it is no more unphilosophical to believe in an omnipotent, omniscient personal God than in natural forces, and that it is not unphilosophical to combine power with intelligence. Paraclete tells Lothair that Goethe:

**"...a Spinozist who did not believe in Spinoza, said that he could bring his mind to the conception that in the centre of space we might meet with a monad of pure intelligence. What may be the centre of space I leave to the daedal imagination of the author of "Faust"; but a monad of pure intelligence, is that more philosophical than the truth, first revealed to man amid these everlasting hills", said the Syrian, "that God made man in His own image?" [L p.396]**

**However, throughout his life, but particularly during the reshaping of Wilhelm Meister from the Sendung to the Lehrjahre, Goethe tried to combat the twin "evils" of, on the one hand, an excessive concern with objective concreteness, and on the other, abstraction which were united, (disastrously in his view), in the domain of contemporary natural science influenced by Newton and Galileo (43).**

**It is therefore his opposition to the Pantheism of Mr Phoebus, with its attendant denial of a conscious creator which gives a central role to Paraclete in the development and education of Lothair (44). Paraclete opposes the illusions of science which appeared to prove the insignificance of man, which Disraeli strenuously denied; it is not through scientific method that we advance in knowledge, but rather through "an abnormal power of piercing mysteries granted only to a few distinguished seers" (45). But the novel seems to embrace a universal faith in going to seek the "cradle" for Paraclete tells Lothair that "the Hellenes and the Hebrews, brought together the treasures of their accumulated wisdom and secured the civilisation of man" [L p.39]. Lothair is thus convinced of the correctness of duty which stems from religion; civilisation and a sense of order have been "cradled" by religion. Lothair is not necessarily persuaded of the doctrines of Anglicanism, and this follows Disraeli's own line. However Anglicanism is an expression of patriotism,**

as well as being an expression of a sense of duty which patriotism confers on the aristocracy.

The Catholics among the British aristocracy had a far greater sense of order and duty than the Anglicans, and in a sense it is this aspect which Disraeli is emphasising when he criticises the Anglicans who were failing to enhance patriotic feeling in the lower classes. Therefore it is not an "anti-Catholic" novel, although Disraeli thought the Catholic defection to Rome was diluting the strong national element. He admired their fervour - and it was Catholic fervour which was required by the Anglican aristocracy. The Church, however, should be rooted on British soil, and the Church of Rome did not have its roots in England: Disraeli's point was that the order and stability that comes from the strength of a sense of duty should be rooted in England. Therefore Disraeli saw that the aristocracy was not setting a good example and was failing to exemplify patriotic feeling.

In his sense of duty to society which 'is natural to man', Lothair is related to Wilhelm Meister. After his meeting with Paraclete Lothair returns to England to find that his capable lawyer and man of business, Mr Putney Giles, has not only discredited the story of Lothair's defection to the Roman Catholic Church, but effectively quashed the rumour and demonstrated Lothair's philanthropic duty by building two churches on Lothair's estate (46), and subscribing generously to various Anglican churches in Lothair's name. This, while demonstrating the distance inevitably between the philanthropist and the object of his philanthropy, however

**underlines Disraeli's central intention of evoking the idea of Lothair as responsible citizen.**

## VII

The classical "Bildungsroman" has the protagonist pay a price, which is the loss of his freedom, so that the ending is one in which socialization is granted to a responsible citizen. What is evident in Lothair is that the "Bildungsroman" exemplifies the desire for reconciliation rather than estrangement; in Lothair the aristocracy joins forces with "the people", and in Wilhelm Meister it is the opposing social poles of Wilhelm and Lothair and Jarno. In denying estrangement, Disraeli shows that revolution has to be avoided at all cost, and Lothair's experience in the Italian revolution demonstrates that the "pull" of two opposing forces is destructive. In effect, Disraeli's symbolic use of the Italian revolution shows that the aristocracy needs to live in harmony with "the people".

The world of Disraeli, as exemplified by Lothair, is still aristocratic and through a certain amount of modernization of thought, the aristocracy could continue to live in a symbolically compact aristocratic society which preserved the natural inequalities of man, and which, through philanthropic gestures, could avoid conflict or revolution. Individual autonomy, as Stendhal's Julien Sorel and Disraeli's Contarini Fleming have shown, engenders conflict, while the classical "Bildungsroman" attempts to embody social cohesion and reconciliation.

Lothair's progress is one in which he is not destined to be a leader, and his future is one of contenting himself with the world as it is and keeping his own

estates in order as a paternalist landowner. Somewhat reminiscent of Contarini Fleming's father's admonition to 'read less', the conclusive message of Lothair is delivered by the spokesman for the revolutionaries, Lothair's commanding officer the General. He delivers it after hearing Lothair himself admit that his 'soldiering has not been very fortunate':

"Whatever you do", said the General "give up dreams".

...

"Action may not always be happiness",..."but there is no happiness without action...were I you, I would return home and plunge into affairs. That was a fine castle of yours I visited one morning; a man who lives in such a place must be able to find a great deal to do". [L p.407]

This acceptance of such limited possibilities is consistent with the attitudes Disraeli himself expressed in the 1870 General Preface that 'the aspect of the world and this country,...,is at this time dark and distressful' [VG p.xiv]. At the time of writing Lothair the aristocracy displayed a lack of leadership, and Disraeli offers versions of vacuity in his portraits of both Bertram and St.Aldegonde as representative aristocrats. Their absence from Parliament illustrated aristocratic indifference to their responsibilities.



## VIII

Both Lothair and Wilhelm Meister have been subjected to, and taken over by, opinions which are not their own, and Lothair admits, not only having ‘formed’ but also to have ‘changed many opinions’ [L p.466]. Wilhelm Meister too is moulded by others who will ‘develop his dim, early awareness of the whole world’ (47). Following one’s own conviction can be not only ‘more’, but ‘less’ worthwhile than accepting authority. Hegel articulates this in both the Phenomenology and The Philosophy of Right. In the Phenomenology his considered view is that:

...following one’s own conviction is, of course, more than giving oneself over to authority; but changing an opinion accepted on authority into an opinion held out of personal conviction, does not necessarily alter the content of the opinion, or replace error with truth. The only difference between being caught up in a system of opinions and prejudices based on personal conviction, and being caught up in one based on the authority of others, lies in the added conceit that is innate in the former position. (48)

The classical ‘Bildungsroman’ exemplified by Lothair and Wilhelm Meister has its heroes experience both, by following their own opinions and by accepting the authority of others. In order to relinquish his individuality and his ‘conceit’, Lothair has to succumb to the authority of others, Theodora’s influence remaining strong to the end. What is important is that Lothair, (as Wilhelm Meister does) becomes weary of his individuality and subsumes it in society.

Disraeli’s intention in writing Lothair is indicated both in the motto at the beginning of the novel, from Terentius, ‘Nôsse omnia haec salus est adolescentulis’ (All this is salvation to a young man), and in the General Preface of 1870 in which

he laments that Contarini Fleming 'would have been better if a subject so essentially psychological had been treated at a more mature period of life' [VG pp.xix-xx].

Lothair embodies the danger of ideology and enthusiasm, since both lead to fanaticism, and 'youthful salvation' must become mature enough to repudiate them.

Disraeli reinforces this idea in a letter to Lady Bradford of August 1874:

...Lady C. can't get on with 'Vivian Grey', which I never told her to read. I have no opinion of books written by boys and, therefore, I always discountenance reading 'Vivian Grey' and the 'Young Duke'. I am most interested in what you write about your hero. I fear you will find a great lack of incident after the fatal death. It is all reflection and description.

As a story book there is a want of art in this; but it was not written merely to amuse, or even principally. After all, it was not a book written by a boy, although only five years or so after 'Vivian Grey'; but then they were five years passed in travel and constant thought and frequent solitude. The mind makes a great leap in such processes. (49)

With experience Lothair is able to understand his role in life, and the climax of this process is in Jerusalem when Paraclete demonstrates that both scientific materialism and Mr Phoebus's worship of art and beauty are inadequate to explain the ultimate mystery of man's place and role in the world. There have been many influences in Lothair's life:

What characters and what scenes had he not become acquainted with since his first visit to Belmont! And even now, when they had departed, or were absent, what influence were they not exercising over his life... [L p.458]

Clare Arundel, who eventually takes the veil [L p.461], inspires philanthropy and the building of a cathedral and Mr Putney Giles puts the whole exercise in motion in Lothair's absence and after he had abandoned the plans. Lothair comes to see duty as a way of realising the essential spirit of his aspirations to enrich the lives of others. Lothair, seeing a means of putting his own talents to work to enhance

other's lives, creates a garden for the pleasure of others at Muriel with the aid of Lady Corisande as a place where she "might practice her theory, that flower-gardens should be sweet and luxuriant, and not hard and scentless imitations of works of art" [L p.464].

In working with Corisande, the daughter of a Duke who already had 'a high sense of duty' [L p.2] to improve their estate in the interests of others, Lothair will be carrying out an activity which will satisfy his essential spirit. Realising his creative needs through transforming Muriel, Lothair will regain that expressive relationship between ownership and property which entails duty to others:

...by association of ideas, he [Lothair] thought of the General, and what his old commander had said at their last interview, reminding him of his fine castle, and expressing his conviction that the lord of such a domain must have much to do. [L p.458]

He therefore finally discovers a form of relationship with the external world which matches the essence of his inner needs, and he finds himself linked not only to the past through the inheritance of Muriel, but also to the future via his potential heirs.

## IX

The clash dealt with in the "Bildungsroman" is that between social integration and the autonomy of the individual. When social integration and the escape from individual freedom has been interiorized and recognized as the individual's own, a desire which is paramount, then socialization has become a legitimate value choice and not just a social necessity. The hero then has recognized the advantage of a legitimate social system which functions efficiently.

The "Bildungsroman's" valorization of the existing social order prompts Lothair to look towards the past. His refusal to consider the future still open, his discontinuing the quest for a philosophy of life, is presented as a sign of his achieved maturity and his "Bildung" is concluded. Lothair turns back to the past for his future and retraces his steps by asking his original choice, Corisande, to be his wife.

Lothair is typical of the classical "Bildungsroman" in that it concludes with marriage, and thus the hero willingly limits his freedom, although this limitation was his original aspiration at the outset. Disraeli posited the idea of marriage as a type of social contract founded on a sense of individual obligation; Lothair would hardly have been equal to the 'effort' of the relief of pauperism unless he had a 'happy home to fall back upon' [L p.16]. If an individual does not marry, one leaves social life, either in death, as for Julien Sorel in Le rouge et le noir, or to live in isolation as in Contarini Fleming.

Marriage is also symbolic of home, territory and the family; why else would Lothair, like Voltaire's Candide, conclude with the image of the garden?

The closing line of Candide is:

'That's true enough', said Candide; 'but we must go and work in the garden'. (50)

while that of Lothair is:

'I have been in Corisande's garden', said Lothair, 'and she has given me a rose'. [L p.467].

Symbolic of having arrived at one's homeland, the garden indicates the cessation of time; a 'Bildung' can be seen only as a true 'Bildung' if it can be concluded when youth passes into maturity. Lothair merges with his new world, and comes home to his origins, his quest over; a sense of closure and acceptance of the marriage contract is obtained. The happy ending is the highest form of the 'Bildungsroman', where, as Hegel wrote in the Phenomenology, the only purpose of time is to lead us to an end:

Of the Absolute, it must be said that it is essentially a result, that only in the end is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, viz. to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself. (51)

This is the final and definitive stage of 'Bildung' - the loss of freedom and the returning to origins and homeland. Disraeli thus leaves Lothair, and effectively himself, in a position where his self-determination is erased from the picture, having reached a situation of acceptance in which he is enclosed in a stable set of relationships and belongs to the system.

## **CONCLUSION**

The four "Bildungsromane" on which I have focused this study, Contarini Fleming, Coningsby, Sybil and Lothair are all self-referential. In Lothair Disraeli discovers himself, and the character of Lothair who speaks to the reader of the novel is the author who created him and is in turn a character created by, or implicit in, all the previous novels written by Disraeli.

However as literary characters have no essence they can be inconsistent across different works. A character such as Don Juan has a great number of different treatments, Molière's Le Festin de pierre, Mozart's Don Giovanni, Byron's unfinished epic satire Don Juan, Robert Browning's Fifine at the Fair, Derek Walcott's The Joker of Seville in 1978 and most recently The Last Days of Don Juan. Yet throughout its history, since the Spanish dramatist Tirso da Molina created the prototype of Don Juan in his play El Burlador de Sevilla (1630) (1), it has been given a unified, coherent and consistent presentation. Great characters receive many treatments, perhaps inconsistent with one another but internally coherent and organized. Disraeli was developing a single treatment of his character throughout his work, but his project has given rise to a large number of different interpretations. Many of these interpretations are inconsistent with one another, and it is this which it seems Disraeli hoped would make people ask "Who is the real Disraeli?" "Which is the correct interpretation of his views?"

Each individual is defined by the possession of certain distinctive, potential capacities, and implicitly, by the lack of certain other capacities. The individual consequently has to find and fulfil himself in the classification of his own capacities. It was in Lothair that Disraeli expressed his acceptance of the increasing diversity of function required by a society which has an ideal of human wholeness. Fulfilment was to be found in the interaction of the individual with the community and all its differentiated functions. The problem was that this "wholeness" could be found only by the individual who felt the function he performed in society was his function - not only in the weak sense that this was the function allotted to him by society, but in the strong sense of vocation or calling which stemmed from the distinctive need of his unique nature. In Lothair Disraeli recognises this distinction between a form of life dictated by social factors and one which, while also meeting a social need, is first and foremost the expression of the individual distinctive nature and aspirations as clarified through a process of self-discovery.

In Contarini Fleming Disraeli begins the narrative of his hero, himself, with the emphasis on ambition and youth, and closes it in Lothair with a sharp contrast, in the style of the classical "Bildungsroman" plot which posits "happiness" as the highest value, but at the expense of "freedom". It emphasizes, as in Goethe's work, that youth must end and is subordinated to the idea of maturity. In Contarini Fleming, the beginning of Fleming's quest, he sums up his purpose with remarkable clarity:

When I search into my own breast, and trace the development of my own intellect, and the formation of my own character, all is light and order. The luminous succeeds to the obscure, the certain to the doubtful, the intelligent to the illogical, the practical to the impossible, and I experience



all that refined and ennobling satisfaction that we derive from the discovery of truth, and the contemplation of nature.

I have resolved, therefore, to write the history of my own life, because it is the subject of which I have the truest knowledge. [CF p.3].

These lines are essentially a rephrasing of Rousseau's opening to the Confessions in which he states that:-

I have resolved on an enterprise which has no precedent, and which once complete, will have no imitator. My purpose is to display to my kind a portrait in every way true to nature, and the man I shall portray will be myself.

Simply myself. I know my own heart and understand my fellow man. But I am made unlike any one I have ever met; I will even venture to say that I am like no one in the whole world (2).

This was Rousseau's first full-length autobiographical writing and shows the evolution in the enterprise of understanding the self and presenting it to the world. Like Disraeli's enterprise it is an attempt to communicate his vision of himself. Disraeli's biography follows a development of perfect symmetry. The excessive development of one principle, maturity, eliminates the opposite one, youth. Within each novel both principles are active simultaneously and each novel exhibits and questions values precisely because of its contradictory nature. Society in the nineteenth century England of Disraeli expected the co-existence of happiness, freedom, change, identity and security and in this Disraeli, like Goethe, suggested the possibility of synthesis. His "Bildungsroman" Lothair is less ambitious for synthesis and produces rather the solution of compromise.

As I have shown it is an essential part of the understanding of human nature which Lothair sets out to portray, that each individual is unique and must

work out the particular form of his own distinctive selfhood in and through experiences which are peculiarly his own. It is specific too in conveying the particular social, historical and cultural circumstances of Lothair's self-discovery.

Ultimately unity of Disraeli's life and his novels was impossible. To make a unified character out of his life Disraeli had to write his autobiography as he lived his life, and the work in total resulted in the construction of a character whose "biography" was the character Disraeli. It is the "autobiography" that emerges through Disraeli's work which is important, and not the "life" out of which it grew. In Disraeli's eyes it is only such a character who can have any influence on history, for as Sidonia tells Coningsby "for life in general there is but one decree. Youth is a blunder; Manhood a struggle; Old Age a regret." [C p.125].

## **NOTES**

**NOTES**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Mill, John Stuart, The Spirit of the Age, edited F.A. von Hayek, (Chicago, 1942), p.6. Articles reprinted from Examiner, January-May 1831.
2. Bulwer-Lytton, Edward, England and the English, (London, 1833), p.281.
3. Blake, Robert, Disraeli, (Methuen, 1967), p.17.
4. Blake, Disraeli, pp.190-191.
5. Watson, George, The English Ideology: Studies in the Language of Victorian Politics, (London, 1973), p.133.
6. Harvie, Christopher, The Centre of Things: Political Fiction in Britain from Disraeli to the Present, (London, 1991).
7. Schwarz, Daniel R. Disraeli's Fiction, (London, 1979), p.84.
8. Schwarz, Disraeli's Fiction, pp.90; 93.
9. Braun, Thom, Disraeli the Novelist, (London, 1981), p.74.

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10.       Howe, Susanna, Wilhelm Meister and his English Kinsmen: apprentices to life, (New York, 1930) pp.197-198.
  
11.       Dilthey, W. Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung, (Leipzig, 1907) pp.374-375, (my translation).

**CHAPTER 1: Contarini Fleming as "Bildungsroman"**

1. In this century Horace B. Samuel specifically refers to it as the "English Wilhelm Meister" in his essay "The Psychology of Benjamin Disraeli", in Modernities, (London, 1914).

2. The Spectator, 5, (19th May, 1832), pp.471-472. Pigault Lebrun, Charles A. (1753-1835) French writer of satirical comedies such as Le Pessimiste (1789), Charle et Caroline (1790), Monsieur Bott (1803).

3. New Monthly Magazine, 35, (July, 1832), pp.26-28. Edward Bulwer-Lytton was editor of this magazine. This review was included in a reprint of his articles Asmodeus at Large, which named him as author, published in Philadelphia in 1833.

4. The title page of Disraeli's copy of Wilhelm Meisters Apprenticeship translated by Thomas Carlyle reads:

Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship: a novel from the German of Goethe  
in 3 vols.

Edinburgh - published by Oliver & Boyd, Twedale - Court; and

G. & W.B. Whittaker, London, 1824.

Book plate reads: FORTI NIHIL DIFFICILE

The Right Honourable Benjamin Disraeli.

5. (1) Disraeli may have taken the name of Contarini Fleming from Gasparo Contarini (1483-1542), a Venetian political writer, humanist, diplomat and theologian - the archetypal Renaissance man and scion of a patrician household. In 1535 he was created a cardinal and worked towards conciliation and reunion between Catholic and Protestant. He wrote The Commonwealth and Government of Venice, translated by Lewis Lewkenor, (London, 1599) (Amsterdam and New York: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum and Da Capo Press, 1969).

Venice was well known for the perfection of its political arrangements - a mixed constitution and the consequent harmonious social relations. Gasparo Contarini's treatise not only celebrates Venetian statecraft, but demonstrates how the mass of the population was integrated into the commonwealth despite ostensibly being excluded from the political process - an end Disraeli had in view for the harmonious integration of the aristocracy and the people.

- (2) There is evidence that Disraeli read Agathon only after he had written Contarini Fleming. In letter 345 (Tuesday, August 5th 1834) to Lady Blessington he writes "I wish you cd. induce Hookham to entrust me with Agathon, that mad Byronic novel" (DL I p.425). However in letter 346 (Friday, August 15th, 1834) to Lady Blessington he writes that he is "delighted with Agathon. It left me musing which is a test of a great

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work....Wieland indeed always delights me. I sympathise with him much. There is a wild Oriental fancy blended with his Western philosophy which is charming union". (DL I p.426).

(3) Agathon is a romantic tale by Christoph Martin Wieland, published in Germany in 1767. English translation published by T.Cadell, London in 1773.

(4) Dilthey first introduced the significance of Wilhelm Meister as a generic paradigm in his Leben Schleiermachers Vol 1 (Berlin, 1870).

Ich möchte die Romane, welche die Schule des Wilhelm Meister ausmachen...., Bildungsromane nennen. (I propose to call those novels which make up the school of Wilhelm Meister....Bildungsromane).

Dilthey later expanded the term in Das Erlebnis and die Dichtung (1907) and the influence of this is largely responsible for the essential generic characteristics of the Bildungsroman.

6. Susanne Howe discusses Disraeli's Vivian Grey, Lothair, Sybil, Coningsby as well as, briefly, Contarini Fleming in Wilhelm Meister and his English Kinsmen: apprentices to life, (NY: Columbia, 1930) pp.178-201. In this chapter she argues that "Contarini" does pass through the stage of a kind of apprenticeship but more by accident than design.



7. Werther is the story of his own passion for the Sesenheim pastor's daughter Friederike Brion and its frustration. The development of this frustration which resulted in Werther's suicide was based on a young legal attaché called Jerusalem whom Goethe had met who shot himself on October 30, 1772. Both elements of the story have a minimum of invention and Werther's self-discovery is not succeeded, as was Goethe's, by the possibility of any self-realisation in the social world.

8. In the German Romance: Specimens of its Chief Authors (1827) Carlyle included translations of Jean Paul Richter, Goethe, Heine and Novalis. Carlyle sought Crabb Robinson's help when translating these stories.

9. Carlyle, Thomas, "Heroes and Hero-Worship", in Sartor Resartus; Heroes and Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History, (London, 1908), p.248.

10. Carlyle "Heroes and Hero-Worship", p.250.

11. Carlyle, Thomas, "Biography", in Critical and Miscellaneous Essays: collected and republished, 7 vols (London, 1888), iv, pp.50-66.

12. Carlyle, Thomas, "Translator's Preface to First Edition of Meister's Apprenticeship" [Edinburgh, 1824], in Thomas Carlyle, Critical and Miscellaneous Essays: collected and republished, 7 vols (London, 1888), i, pp.223-228, p.225.

13. Austin, Sarah, Characteristics of Goethe: From the German of Falk, von Müller etc, 3 vols (London, 1833). Conversation with von Müller, (22 January 1821) xxiii, p.119.

14. The novel A Year at Hartlebury; or The Election was first published in 1834 and has recently been attributed to Disraeli and his sister Sarah. The evidence is overwhelming; there are many parallels between the protagonist Aubrey Bohun and Disraeli himself. Bohun offers no explanation for his choice of career in politics but there is an indirect explanation as Bohun is described as a man who "combined a fine poetical temperament with a great love of action - The combination is rare. He was a man of genius". Bohun is aware that he can "work upon men's minds" and convinced that he has the necessary eloquence to "excite and command". He also observes that "to will and to act were one" which parallels Disraeli's observation in the Mutilated Diary that "I am only true great in action".

Disraeli, Benjamin and Sarah, A Year at Hartlebury; or The Election, (John Murray: London, 1983), pp.57-58. These quotations are all from Chapter 14 of the novel, the first detailed description of the character of Aubrey Bohun which

Disraeli wrote, together with the first 9 chapters of Part II. Sarah wrote all of Part I except Chapter 14 and completed the novel apart from the description of Bohun's first days in Parliament, 5 paragraphs in Chapter 2 of Part II.

15. In a letter to Lady Blessington in 1834 in a discussion of Wieland's Agathon Disraeli thought that "The translation of the Agathon is very clumsy. I wish I could read it in the original but I have no talent for languages....Letter 346 (Friday, August 15, 1834, DL I p.426).

16. Monypenny, William Flavelle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, 6 vols, (London, 1910-1920), I, p.192 and Brewster, F.C., Disraeli in Outline, (Cassell, 1890), p.118.

17. Heine listed Disraeli's Vivian Grey also among the fashionable novels of the day. Heine, Heinrich, Sämtliche Schriften, edited by K.Briegleb et al, (Munich 1968-1976), II, p.544.

In later years the editor of the English journal The Critic interviewed Heine who recollected reading Disraeli's Contarini Fleming - a strange wild book, he called it, of a kind which he might have written himself Dichter über ihre Dichtungen: Heinrich Heine, edited by N. and R. Altenhofer, (Munich, 1971) p.307.

18. Carlyle, Thomas, "Goethe", German Romance: Specimens of its Chief Authors, 4 vols (Edinburgh, 1827) Introduction to vol IV.
19. Robinson, Henry Crabb, On Books and their Writers, edited by Edith J. Morley, 3 vols, (London: Dent, 1938), II, pp.574-575. Journal entry for July 24th, 1839.
20. The Vindication was published in 1835 and the "Lord" was Lord Lyndhurst.  
  
Monypenny, Letter from Isaac Disraeli (December 23, 1835), in Life of Benjamin Disraeli, I, p.307.
21. Disraeli, Benjamin, The Letters of Disraeli to Lady Bradford and Lady Chesterfield; edited Marquis of Zetland, 2 vols, (London, 1929) i (1873-1875), p.286. (Letter of September 1875).
22. Disraeli, Benjamin, Coningsby; or The New Generation, (Oxford, 1982), p.105.
23. Disraeli, Benjamin, Disraeli's Reminiscences, edited Helen M. Swartz and Marvin Swartz, (London, 1975), p.58.

24. Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer (1803-1873) later changed his name to Bulwer-Lytton and became in 1866 1st Baron Lytton.
25. Lytton, Robert, Life, Letters and Literary Remains of Edward Bulwer, 2 vols (London, 1883), II, p.98.
26. Bulwer-Lytton's first novel Falkland was published in 1827, but he suppressed it after 1832. Falkland is disillusioned after obtaining "an education of life", and disappointed in both knowledge and love. Disraeli sent Bulwer the manuscript of his novel The Young Duke in Spring 1829 - receiving the advice to remove the more flippant passages. However Disraeli contributed his novel Alroy to the New Monthly magazine during Bulwer-Lytton's editorship in 1831.
27. New Monthly Magazine, (1832), p.429 (Part I section 3). It is possibly 1832, the year of the Reform Bill and Goethe and Scott's death, that Carlyle and Bulwer-Lytton first met.
28. Bulwer-Lytton makes this point in the Preface to his novel Ernest Maltravers, or the Eleusinia, (London, 1844). His novel Godolphin (1833) also parallels Wilhelm Meister, particularly in the theatre and apprenticeship aspects.
29. Letter 346 to Lady Blessington, DL I p.426.

30. Mutilated Diary, (September 1st, 1833) Appendix III D.L.I p.446.
31. New Monthly Magazine 35 (July, 1832), pp.26-28.
32. This letter appears in A Publisher and his Friends: memoir and correspondence of the late John Murray....1768-1843, edited by Samuel Smiles, 2 vols, 2nd edition (London: John Murray, 1891) p.338 as well as DL.

John Murray was Disraeli's publisher with whom the D'Israelis had fallen out over the abortive attempt to launch the daily paper The Representative.

Disraeli contested Wycombe twice in June and December 1832 as Tory Radical but was defeated. A letter from Benjamin Austen in July 1830 indicates that the idea of standing for Parliament had been suggested before Disraeli left for the East. Bulwer-Lytton was on the side of Reform, although this is not to suggest that Disraeli was completely influenced by Bulwer-Lytton. Disraeli's object was to get into Parliament, and as the tide was against the Tories Disraeli would not commit himself to the losers. Disraeli, although he had no fixed political ideas, stood as a Radical for Wycombe. He collaborated on the Anti-Whig publication, produced by Murray in April, 1832, England and France: or a Cure for Ministerial Gallomania" with anonymous 300 page long melodramatic account of the July Revolution with a vituperative attack on the Government's pro-French foreign policy. For a discussion of this see Robert Bake, Disraeli (London: Methuen, 1969) p.85.

33. Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, Truth and Fantasy from my Life, edited by J.M. Cohen, (London, 1949), p.31. Goethe's Dichtung und Wahrheit originally appeared in four parts in 1811, 1812, 1814 and 1833.

34. This passage appears to be a direct "borrowing" from Dichtung und Wahrheit: Goethe writes:

It is a fundamental weakness of human nature to want to do the thing one sees someone else doing, regardless of whether one has any talent for it or not...nothing could stop me now, as a boy,....from trying my hand at the French drama to the best of my ability....And as my head was full of such odds and end from Ovid's Metamorphoses Pomey's Pantheon Mysticism, I had soon put together a little play of the same sort in my imagination [Truth and Fantasy p.32].

It is interesting to note that while the young Goethe imagined himself as a writer of plays, Disraeli saw himself as the actor creating the roles.

35. Goethe, J.W. von The Sufferings of Young Werther, trans. B.Q. Morgan, (London, 1974), p.63.

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36. There is still a copy of Mme de Staël's De Allemagne, 3 vols (1813) in Disraeli's library at Hughenden Shelf P7 (11)-(13). The bookplate indicates it belonged to Benjamin Disraeli and was not one of the volumes inherited from his father Isaac D'Israeli's library.

37. Hegel, G.W.F. Hegel's Introduction to Aesthetics being The Introduction to The Berlin Aesthetics Lectures of the 1820's, translated T.M.Knox, (Oxford, 1979), p.62.

38. Hegel, p.62.

39. Stephen, Leslie, "Mr Disraeli's Novels", Fortnightly Review, (October, 1874), pp.430-450.

40. The Literary Gazette, No. 799, (12 May, 1832), pp.289-91. According to Disraeli, in a letter to Sarah Disraeli "The review in the Lit[erary] Gaz[ette] is by L[etitia] E.L[andon] so Bulwer says,..(Letter 188, D.L. I p.272).

41. The Spectator, vol 5, (19 May, 1982), pp.471-472.



42. Disraeli's Reminiscences are the closest approach to non-fictional autobiography which he wrote probably between 1862 and 1866, with the bulk composed in 1863 and 1865. They are in Box 26, A/X/A Hughenden Papers. Published in book form, and edited by Helen M Swartz and Marvin Swartz as Disraeli's Reminiscences, (London: H Hamilton, 1975).
43. Mutilated Diary H A/III/C1-41.
44. Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, "Byron's Don Juan" (1821), The Permanent Goethe, edited by Thomas Mann, (New York, 1948) pp.587-589.
- Carlyle used this "mirror" image of Goethe's in a letter to Sterling, 29 September, 1839 and in a letter to Geraldine Jewsbury, 26 April, 1840 (MSS 531 and 3823 National Library of Scotland).
45. McGann, Jerome J., "The Book of Byron and the Book of the World", in The Beauty of Inflections: literary investigation in historical method and theory, (Oxford, 1988) p.261.
46. McGann, pp.287-288, p.291 and p.293.
47. Bloom, Harold, The Anxiety of Influence: a theory of poetry, (OUP, 1975), p.80.

48. Bloom, p.148.

49. John Murray, Disraeli's publisher, submitted the manuscript of Contarini Fleming to Henry Hart Milman prior to publication withholding Disraeli's name, but he received a favourable report.

Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868) was Professor of Poetry at Oxford 1821-1831, dean of St Paul's and author of a number of dramas (1815-26), editor of Gibbon (1838), author of History of the Jews (1830). His principal work, The History of Latin Christianity, was published 1854-5.

50. Smiles, II (pp.337-38) prints Milman's letter to Murray on Contarini Fleming written 5 March, 1832.

51. Nietzsche, Friedrich, The Gay Science, trans Walter Kaufmann, (New York, 1974), p.335.

52. Nietzsche, Friedrich, The Will to Power, trans Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, (New York, 1968), p.490.

53. Nietzsche, Will to Power, p.95.

54. Nietzsche, Will to Power, p.49.

55. Proust, Marcel, Remembrance of Things Past, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, (New York, 1981), III, p.915.

56. For Wordsworth in The Prelude "....so feeling comes in aid/of feeling, and diversity of strength/Attends us, if but once we have been strong".

Wordsworth, William, The Prelude; or Growth of a Poet's Mind (Text of 1805) (O.U.P., 1970), Bk xi, II. pp.326-328, p.215.

57. Heaney, Seamus, 'The Indefatigable Hoof-Taps: Sylvia Plath', The Government of the Tongue, (Faber, 1988), pp.148-170.

58. Stendhal, The Life of Henry Brulard, translated by C.A. Phillips, (London, 1925).

59. Le rouge et le noir was published in 2 volumes in 1831. Other translations are by H.B. Samuel (1916); C.K. Scott-Moncrieff, The Red and the Black (New York, 1926) and in London (1927) as Scarlet and Black; M.R.B. Shaw (London, 1953), L. Bair The Red and the Black (New York, 1958); R.M. Adams, (1969); L.C. Parks (1971).

60. Disraeli, Benjamin, "The Character of Sir Robert Peel", Lord George Bentinck: a political biography, 4th edition, revised, (London: Colburn, 1852), pp.302-331.
61. Disraeli, Coningsby, pp.64-65.
62. Blake, Disraeli. Blake argues (p.54) that Disraeli's scorn for mediocrity is "the quintessence of Disraeli".
63. Carlyle, "Heroes and Hero-Worship", p.466.
64. Stendhal encountered Claude-Adrien Helvétius (1715-71) in De L'Esprit (1758) which lays stress on social forces in forming the mind. Helvétius asserted that "...the man of genius is only the product of the circumstances in which he has found himself". This stress on environment in both De L'Esprit and also De l'homme, de ses facultés intellectuelles et de son education (1772) made a lasting impression on Stendhal.
65. Heller, Agnes, Everyday Life, (London, 1984) p.20.
66. Hegel, Georg W.F. "Introduction", The Philosophy of History, (New York, 1956), p.31.

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67. Heller, p.22.
68. Lukács, Georg, Theory of the Novel: a historico-philosophic essay on the forms of great epic literature (London, 1978), pp.73 and 77.
69. Helvétius III, Discourse, Chapter VII.
70. Helvétius, Chapter VIII.
71. Starobinski, Jean, "Stendhal Pseudonyme", L'Oeil Vivant: essai, (Paris, 1961).
72. Friedenberg, Edgar Z., The Vanishing Adolescent, (New York, 1970), pp.29 and 34.
73. Disraeli's desire to achieve success as a poet manifested itself in The Revolutionary Epick [1834] as well as in his verse play The Tragedy of Count Alarcos (1839) claiming that he undertook the venture in competition with Shakespeare. Power, and its attainment, is the subject of both works - Napoleon is the real hero of The Revolutionary Epick, although murder is the price of political power for the protagonist of Alarcos.

74. Miller, Karl, "Proteus, Doubles: studies in literary history, (Oxford, 1987), pp.21-38 for a discussion of "duality" and the double life particularly with reference to Romanticism.

75. The Tower is a central symbol in Wilhelm Meister in Books 7 and 8. The Society of the Tower gives Meister guidance which he accepts and he becomes part of a family which has both the will and means to foster cultural and intellectual ideals which ultimately will point the way to a new society.

76. Hegel, G.W.F. Phenomenology of Spirit, translated by A.V. Miller, (Oxford, 1979), p.11. The Phenomenology is itself a "Bildungsroman", being the story of a journeying consciousness called Spirit, travelling from its "natural" state along a road which passes through deceptions and disappointments to "absolute knowledge".

77. Eliot, George, The George Eliot Letters, edited by Gordon S. Haight, 7 vols., (New Haven, 1954-55), 2, p.324.

78. Novels and Tales of Benjamin Disraeli, edited by Philip Guedalla, 12 vols (London, 1927), xi Lothair, pp.67 and 62.

The character Lothair is possibly borrowed from Goethe's Lothario in Wilhelm Meister. In this novel Lothair is a rich young aristocrat.

79. Stephen, "Mr Disraeli's Novels", Fortnightly Review pp.430-450.

**CHAPTER 2: Coningsby as "Bildungsroman"**

1. Disraeli based this account of Herbert's death directly on Edward Trelawny's account of his finding Shelley's body at Via Reggio:

The tall, slight figure, the jacket, the volume of Aeschylus in one pocket, and Keats's poems in the other doubled back, as if the reader, in the act of reading, had hastily thrust it away....

The name Marmion Herbert may be taken from Sir Walter Scott's Marmion (1808), which together with The Lay of the Last Minstrel (1805) and The Lady of the Lake (1810) established him as a poet.

Trelawny, Edward John, Recollections of the last Days of Shelley and Byron, (1858), (London, 1933).

2. Shelley, Percy Bysshe, Shelley's Prose, or, The Trumpet of Prophecy; edited David Lee Clark, (London, 1988) p.297.

3. Shelley's Prose, p.281.

4. Henry Thomas Hope (1808-1862), "a generous spirit and enlightened mind" was son of the banker Thomas Hope. Disraeli began to write Coningsby at Hope's country house "Deepdene" in Surrey.

5. The Eclectic Review was a journal of dissenting opinion founded in 1805 and edited by T.Price in 1844.

6. Eclectic Review, 4th series, Vol.16, (July, 1844), pp.50-71.

7. W.M. Thackeray in Morning Chronicle, 13, (May, 1844). This review reprinted in G.N. Ray's edition of Thackeray's Contributions to the Morning Chronicle (Illinois, 1955) pp.39-50.

8. The Times reviewed Coningsby on 11, 15, 16, 20 and 28 May, 1844. The review on 15th May thought that Disraeli's opinions would "be offensive to some, and unintelligible to more", because they were no more than "irrational symptoms of the most obsolete Toryism", and full of inconsistencies". John Thadeus Delane [1817-1879] was editor of The Times from 1841-1877.

9. DLIV, Letter 1345, p.122.

Morning Chronicle, (13 May, 1844).

10. New Monthly Magazine, Vol.71, (June, 1844), pp.206-215.

Apart from the Eclectic Review, the Morning Chronicle, The Times and The New Monthly Magazine, Coningsby was reviewed in:

Edinburgh Review, Vol.80, (October, 1844), pp.517-525.



**Fraser's Magazine, Vol.30, (July, 1844), pp.71-84.**

**Hood's Magazine, Vol.I, (June, 1844), pp.601-604.**

**Literary Gazette, No.1426, (18 May, 1844), pp.315-319.**

**Revue des Deux Mondes, 5th series, Vol.7, (1 August, 1844), pp.385-417.**

**Ainsworth's Magazine, (June, 1844), pp.497-503.**

**The Christian Remembrancer, (June, 1844), pp.667-689, which was a High Church periodical which declared opposition to Peel's Ecclesiastical Commission. The anonymous reviewer sympathised with many of Disraeli's ideas, notably on continuity and national unity, and praised Young England as a symbol of potential national and political renewal.**

**The Critic, 1st series, Vol.I, (15 May, 1844), pp.186-188.**

**The Westminster Review, XLII, (September, 1844), pp.80-105.**

11. Speare, M.E., **The Political Novel: its development in England and America**, (New York, 1924), pp.1-3.

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12. Speare, pp.50-51.
13. Blake, Robert, Disraeli, (London, 1967), pp.190-191.
14. Lucas, John, editor, Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century. (London, 1971), p.3.
15. Fraser's Magazine, Vol.30, (July, 1844), pp.71-84, [p.73].
16. Weeks, Richard G., "Disraeli as Political Egoist: a literary and historical investigation", in Journal of British Studies, 28, (October, 1989), pp.387-410, [p.398].
17. Perry Anderson argues that the condition of the new bourgeoisie, the manufacturing middle classes of Manchester and the North "depended on the prior existence of a class which was also capitalist in its mode of exploitation. There was from the start no fundamental antagonistic contradiction between the old aristocracy and the new bourgeoisie. English capitalism embraced and included both". Anderson, Perry, "Origins of the Present Crisis", New Left Review, 1964, 23, pp.26-53. [p.31]

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18. Allison, Lincoln: "The English Cultural Movement", in New Society, 43 (16 February, 1978), p.358.

19. Digby, Kenelm. The Broad Stone of Honour; or, Rules for the Gentlemen of England, (London, 1823), Prologue, pp.ix-x.

20. Digby was a convert to the Church of Rome and was influenced by de Maistre, de Bonald and "the celebrated Schlegel" (Digby,p.185) quoting from him as well as Mme de Staël. He praised the medieval social system convinced that it was superior to modern society because of its religious faith. He thought materialism divisive and shared the anti-industrialism common to nineteenth century medievalists, lamenting in one of the lengthy passages taken from Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France, that "the age of chivalry is gone! That of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded" (Digby, p.647).

21. The essay on chivalry was written in 1818. It was reprinted in Scott's Miscellaneous Prose Works, II, (1878), pp.525-54.

22. Disraeli wrote in his Reminiscences:

When I was quite a youth (1825) I was travelling in Scotland, and my father gave me a letter to Sir Walter Scott. I visited him at Abbotsford. I remember him quite well... He would read aloud in the evening, or his daughter, an interesting girl, Anne Scott, would sing some ballad on the harp. He liked to tell a story of some Scotch chief, and sometimes of some Scotch lawyer. I was at Abbotsford again later in the year for a day.

Disraeli's Reminiscences, edited by Helen M. Swartz and Marvin Swartz, (London, 1975), pp.9-10. This second meeting is probably a reference to the disastrous venture of John Murray's, The Disraelis' publisher who published the Quarterly Review. Encouraged by Disraeli he went ahead with plans (which later foundered) to start a daily newspaper, The Representative. Disraeli was sent to Edinburgh on September 12th and again in November to persuade Sir Walter Scott's son-in-law, J.G. Lockhart to become involved.

23. This point has been argued by Ioan Williams in The Realist Novel in England: a study in development, (London, 1974), p.44.

24. Lukács, Georg, The Historical Novel, trans. by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell, (Harmondsworth, 1962), pp.136ff.

25. Lukács, p.149.

26. Jameson, Fredric, Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century dialectical theories of literature, (Princeton, 1971), p.166.

27. Hazlitt, William, Complete Works, edited by P.P. Howe, 21 vols, (London and Toronto, 1931), vol. xvii, p.247.

28. Hazlitt, Works, xvii, pp.252-3.

29. The composition of the House of Commons was to a large extent determined by the patronage of the great land owners. The Society of Friends of the People which sought reform of Parliament observed that a majority of England's MP's were elected by just over 11,000 people in 1793. Since the population of Britain almost quintupled between 1700 and the Great Reform Act of 1832 while the number of voters in most boroughs remained static, the prospect of democratic electorates was usually a matter of influence by the "borough-mongers", either peer or wealthy commoner, and a contest was pointless since the borough was entirely at the disposal of one man. John Wilson Croker (ridiculed by Disraeli as Rigby) calculated in 1827 that no fewer than 276 members were directly nominated by patrons.

30. Scott, Sir Walter, Poetical Works, vol xii, (Edinburgh, 1880), p.447.

31. Goethe, J W von, Götz von Berlichingen, trans Charles E. Passage, (New York, 1965) p.130.

32. Burke, Edmund, The Complete Works of Edmund Burke, 16 vols, (London, 1803-1827), v, p.149.

33. The address delivered to the members of the Manchester Athenaeum, October 23rd, 1844 was entitled The Value of Literature to Men of Business. The visit to Manchester was during Disraeli's tour of the "manufacturing districts" when he was accompanied by two other Young England members, Lord John Manners and Baillie-Cochrane. The first line of this quotation is used by Disraeli as the closing line of Sybil.

This speech is contained in Selected Speeches of the Late Rt. Hon. the Earl of Beaconsfield, edited by T.E. Kebbel, 2 vols., (London, 1882), ii, pp.617-629 [pp.627-628].

34. Raymond, E.T., Disraeli, the alien patriot, (London, 1925).

35. The history of Sidonia's family is recounted by Disraeli in Book III, Chapter 10 of Coningsby pp.220-233. The original of this character, asserted by the key to the character in Coningsby, is supposed to be Baron A de Rothschild of Naples. Although the account of Sidonia's father in outline is an account of Nathan Meyer Rothschild who financed half Europe after the Battle of Waterloo, established one brother as a banker in Paris and another in Vienna, and who became a naturalised Englishman in 1804.

36. Shelley, Percy Bysshe, "A Defence of Poetry" in Shelley's Prose: or the trumpet of prophecy, edited by David Lee Clark, (London, 1988) pp.275-297 [pp.282-3].

37. Isaac D'Israeli had written in The Literary Character; or the History of Men of Genius, drawn from their own feelings and confessions. Literary Miscellanies; and an Inquiry into the Character of James the First; edited by B. Disraeli, (London, 1859), about the genius of genius which had grown from a study of the "genius", or characteristic disposition of literary men, into one of "men of genius".

38. Max Weber (1864-1920), the German sociologist, proposed the idea of independent parliaments which could be the training ground for strong national leaders. Their source of authority would be charismatic, rather than traditional (eg. kings) or national-legal (eg. directors of companies). Charismatic authority was enjoyed by leaders who could inspire a degree of loyalty, trust, and commitment in their followers that would leave leaders free to act in the way they thought best. Responsible national leaders would emerge fully aware of the national needs and the complex interdependence of the national life, and able through their popular support to rise above the narrow sectional interests of pressure groups, and consequently represent the national interest.

39. Carlyle, Thomas, Sartor Resartus. On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History, (London, 1908), pp.250-251.

40. Carlyle, Heroes, Lecture 6.

41. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, "The Stateman's Manual", Two Lay Sermons and Biographia Literaria, (London, 1898), p.318. Carlyle, Heroes, p.452.

Hume saw "heroic" qualities as a mask which hid selfish ambition, or else as a form of delusion or madness.

42. For example Lady Everingham who was one of the aristocratic women who were "deeply sensible of the responsibility of their position". Coningsby was "deeply interested as he watched the magic of her manner, as she melted the obdurate, inspired the slothful, consoled the afflicted..." (C p.157).

43. Scott observed the problems of the "mechanical age" in Familiar Letters (1894), ii, p.78.

"The unhappy dislocation which has taken place betwixt the employer and those in his employment has been attended with very fatal consequences. Much of this is owing to the steam engine".



44. According to Disraeli's view of history the Reform Act of 1832 followed from the "spirit of utility". The Act signalled the supremacy of the House of Commons and eliminated the powers of the Crown. The three orders, nobility, Church and commons lost their function with the consequent peril to England, which existed in the decline of its character as a community. Social disorganisation resulted because the various classes within the country were arrayed against each other. The Church was the means by which the "despised and degraded classes" asserted the native equality of man and vindicated the rights and powers of the intellect. But the Church was also degraded by its humiliating connection with the state which prevented it from performing its rightful function. (C pp.79, 104-105, 369-380).

45. Bettelheim, Bruno, The Uses of Enchantment: the meaning and importance of fairy tales, (Harmondsworth, 1978,) p.127.

46. Bettelheim, pp.9-10.

47. Quoted by Alexander Welsh in The Hero of the Waverley Novels, (New Haven and London, 1963), pp.49-50.

48. Schiller, Friedrich, On the Aesthetic Education of Man: in a series of letters, edited by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby, (Oxford, 1967), Sixth Letter, p.43.

49. (1) The Red Book. A directory - The Royal Kalendar and Court and City Register for England, Scotland, Ireland, and the Colonies, [1767-1893]. Included lists of members of both Houses of Parliament, Officers of the State, Law, Revenue and other public departments. Also names of the Princes of Europe and their issue as well as the Peerage, Baronetage and Universities.

(2) Beatsons Political Index - Robert Beatson.

A Political Index to the Histories of Great Britain and Ireland; or, a complete register of the hereditary honours, public offices and persons in office, from the earliest periods to the present time, 3 vols, (Edinburgh 1786).

50. Croker, Rt. Hon. John Wilson, The Correspondence and Diaries, edited by Louis J. Jennings, 3 Vols, (London, 1885) III, p.9.

Croker (1780-1857) was M.P. for Aldeburgh, Suffolk 1826-27 and 1830-32.

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51. Anderson, Perry. "Origins of the Present Crisis" in New Left Review, 23 (1964), pp.26-53, [pp.39-40]
52. Burke. p. 25.
53. Trilling, Lionel Sincerity and Authenticity, (Oxford, 1972) pp.114-115.
54. Hegel, G.W.F., Phenomenology of Spirit; translated by A.V. Miller, (Oxford, 1977) p.305 (paragraphs 500 and 501).
55. Charles I's Petition of Rights - Parliament tells Charles that his subjects have inherited liberty claiming their franchises as the rights of Englishmen and as patrimony derived from forefathers' not on abstract principles as the "rights of men". Burke's main argument against the "abstract principles" of the French Revolution is that "It has been the uniform policy of our constitution to claim and assert our liberties, as an entailed inheritance derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity; as an estate specially belonging to the people of this kingdom, without any reference whatever to any other more general or prior right". Burke, Edmund, Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the proceedings in certain societies in London relative to that event, edited by Conor Cruise O'Brien, (Harmondsworth, 1968).

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56. Perkin, Harold, Origins of Modern English Society, (London, 1969), pp.194-195.

57. Disraeli, Benjamin. Speeches, p.443.

58. Disraeli, Benjamin. Bradenham Edition of the Novels and Tales of Benjamin Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield, 12 vols, (London, 1927), i, p.xi.

59. Manchester was the show city as well as the "shock" city of the Industrial Revolution.

60. Burke, Reflections, p.106.

61. Disraeli, Benjamin. Lord George Bentinck: a political biography, 4th ed. rev., (London, 1852), p.556.

**CHAPTER 3: Sybil as "Bildungsroman"**

1. Dilthey, W. Leben Schleiermachers, Vol. I, (Berlin, 1870), p.282, (my translation).
2. Lukács, Georg. The Theory of the Novel, (London, 1978), p.135.
3. Lukács, p.132.
4. Lukács, p.132.
5. Disraeli went on a tour of the Continent in August 1826 for two months. He then went on a Grand Tour of the Mediterranean and the Near East in 1830-1831 with William Meredith (engaged to Disraeli's sister, Sarah, but he died on the tour), and later James Clay whom they met in Malta. These travels were formative experiences and were influential in the writing of his novels, particularly Contarini Fleming, Alroy, and Tancred as well as Lothair.
6. Letter 58, Sunday 15 October 1826, to Sarah Disraeli, DL I pp.93-94.
7. Eliot, George. Scenes of Clerical Life, Cabinet Edition, (Edinburgh: Blackwood, n.d.), pp.162-163.

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8. W.R. Greg, (1809-81)  
Westminster Review, Vol. 44, September 1845, pp.141-152.
9. Unsigned review by W. M. Thackeray.  
Morning Chronicle, 13 May 1845, in Thackeray: Contributions to the Morning Chronicle, edited G. N. Ray, (Illinois, 1955), pp.77-86.
10. Disraeli wrote to his sister Sarah, 23 August 1845:  
  
The Oxford & Cam: Review - I will send you the 2 Nos. published. In the first a Rev[ie]w of Sybil by Lord John....  
  
Letter 1434, DL IV, pp.184-186.  
  
Unsigned review in The Oxford and Cambridge Review, Vol. I, July 1845, pp.1-11.
11. Speare, Morris E. The Political Novel p.59.
12. Disraeli, Benjamin, Sybil, with an introduction by A.N. Jeffares, (London, 1957), pp. vii-xx.
13. Himmelfarb, Gertrude The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age, (London, 1984), pp. 498-499.

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14. Blake, p.181 writes that "Much of Sybil is devoted to the conditions of the working class in the great manufacturing capitals".
15. Bradford, Sarah, Disraeli, (London, 1985), p.198 points to the theme of the novel as "the striking contrast between the gilded life of the rich in England and the misery and degradation of the working classes".
16. Vincent, John, Disraeli, (Oxford, 1990), p.92.
17. John James Robert Manners (1818-1906) was an active member of Young England. A close friend of Disraeli, he was the second son of the fifth Duke of Rutland, becoming the seventh Duke in 1888 on the death of his brother.
18. Sichel, Walter. Introduction to the World's Classics edition of Sybil or the Two Nations (London, 1926), pp.v-xiii, (p.vii).
19. Shakespeare, William, Hamlet, I, iv, 90.
20. The nineteenth-century movement for factory reform actually began in 1802 under Sir Robert Peel, father of the prime minister, with his successful Health and Morals of Apprentices Act. The elder Peel led the movement for a more general

regulation of child labour in the factories, culminating in the 1819 act. Sir John Cam Hobhouse proposed legislation designed to make Peel's acts effective which was passed into law in 1825. The ten-hours movement began in the 1830s led at the outset by Thomas Michael Sadler who chaired a Select Committee and sponsored a ten-hours bill in the House of Commons in 1832. The Factory Act of 1833, based upon the evidence and recommendation of the Royal Commission was framed by Edwin Chadwick. Factory legislation was not the special work of Tory paternalists, but had broad support from both sides of the House of Commons. Essential tension over the factory question was not between ideological stances such as socialism and capitalism or collectivism and individualism, and the proponents and the critics of ten-hours legislation were agreed upon general social goals. However they were divided by different ways of viewing the industrial system and by different concepts of political action, on the one hand seeking the improvement of the working classes through legislation to limit the hours of labour, and on the other seeking the same objective through an expanding economy.

21. Chartism was not one movement but many; its one unifying feature was the demand for political reform as expressed in the People's Charter, (May 1838). The Chartists failed to achieve their six points and their vision of a Parliament responsible to the whole people was never realized. Working men were admitted piecemeal, until 1919, into the electoral system commencing with Disraeli's



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**Conservative Government Reform in 1867. This was a tactical manoeuvre of Disraeli's, for class peace had always been his aim. The death of "hunger Chartism" which followed the better economic climate accompanying the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the increasing stability of major industries could be an explanation for Chartism's decline. Another explanation is offered in the view that the end of Chartism was signalled by the incorporation of the articulate members of the working class into the traditions, and values of the middle class. Unlike Disraeli, Carlyle had written his essay "Chartism" at the height of the movement in 1839. The importance of Chartism for Carlyle was that human suffering was the fault of the ruling class which permitted it, coupled with their failure to guide. His concern, like Disraeli, is not to account for the phenomenon he describes but to force the reader into a moral response.**

**22. Developments in a post-Waterloo period combined to impose a strain on the social fabric, industrialization possibly being the least damaging. The great post-Waterloo slump in trade and manufacture, an unprecedented expansion of population and the increasing urbanisation of British Society created an aggregate of social ills which caused concern at that time.**

23.       **The Young Duke** (1831) has as its subject the moral degeneration and dissipation of George Augustus Frederick, Duke of St. James who becomes one of the wealthiest men in Europe upon his 21st birthday. It is a social satire of the profligate aristocracy and is the novel which begins Disraeli's concept of a politically conscientious aristocracy, as the Young Duke is redeemed by his progress into a responsible member of "res publica". The catalyst is Mary Dacre and the Duke is the Protestant captivated by the innocent purity of a young female Catholic, a theme repeated in Sybil.

The subject of Henrietta Temple (1837) is the redemptive possibilities of love for Henrietta Temple in a potentially talented, but very immature and irresponsible, idealistic young man, Ferdinand Armine, as well as having, as background the history of the Catholic nobility in England.

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24. Carlyle, Thomas. Past and Present (1843), Centenary Edition, (London, 1897).

Book III, chapter 8, p.173

Book III, chapter 8, p.176, p.178.

Book IV, chapter 6, p.284.

25. George Augustus Frederick Percy Sydney Smythe, seventh Viscount Strangford and second Baron Penshurst (1818-57), eldest son of sixth Viscount Strangford and first Baron Penshurst. Became Tory MP for Canterbury in 1841. Closely associated with Young England, he drew away from Disraeli when the latter was in opposition to Peel.

26. Belvoir Castle Archives, Lincolnshire, Lord John Manners Journal (186Q).

27. Smythe, Manners and Disraeli had each made a speech at the annual Manchester Athenaeum Soirée, 3 October 1844, which were published in January 1845 (Morning Post, 21 January 1845); Disraeli's was his famous speech on the liberalizing effects of the pursuit of knowledge. After 3 October the Disraeli's visited W.S. Standish 4 October, Lord Frances Egerton at Worsley Hall 7 (?) October, and W.B. Ferrand at Harden Grange Bingley on 9 October. The speech at Bingley, 9 October was made at a dinner in celebration of the successful introduction of allotments on 15 acres owned by Ferrand's aunt, Mrs Walter Ferrand.

28. Weber, Max. From Max Weber: essays in sociology, translated and edited H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, (London, 1948), p.79
29. Weber, p.80.
30. Weber, p.84.
31. There were fears that the church would become a minority institution; the Religious Census (1851) appeared to confirm these fears. While there was scope for rival interpretations it provided propaganda for nonconformists who campaigned for the disestablishment of the Church of England.
32. Carlyle, Thomas, "Chartism", Critical and Miscellaneous Essays: collected and republished, 7 vols, (London, 1888), vi, pp.109-186, [pp.142-143, 179].
33. Ward, Wilfrid, Life of John Henry, Cardinal Newman, 2 vols, (London & New York, 1912), letter quoted in vol. 2, p.344.
34. Carlyle, Thomas, Past and Present, Centenary Edition, (London, 1897).

35. Stanley, Lord Edward Henry, Disraeli, Derby and the Conservative Party: journals and memoirs of Edward Henry, Lord Stanley, 1849-1869; edited by John Vincent, (Sussex, 1978), p.31.
36. Disraeli's Reminiscences, edited by Helen M. Swartz and Marvin Swartz, (London, 1975), p.103.
37. Stanley, p.179.
38. Maurice, Frederick Denison, The Kingdom of Christ or Hints to a Quaker Respecting the Principles, Constitution and Ordinances of the Catholic Church (1838), edited by A. R. Vidler based on 2nd edition of 1842 (1858), 2 vols I, p.158.
39. Maurice, I, p.220.

40. Aubrey St. Lys is supposed to be based on Father Frederick Faber, a disciple of the Oxford Movement. Faber had already been portrayed as Eustace Lyle in Coningsby. St. Lys is not an exact portrait of Faber, whom Disraeli may never have met, although like Faber, St. Lys has been a college tutor, and "no theory would induce him to marry". St. Lys is about 34 which is older than Faber at the time of action - Faber would have been 23 at the opening of Sybil and 28 at the end. St. Lys has a "serene, though inflexible habit of mind" and with his charitable work in his parish (St. Lys deplores the system which herded women into factories for 14 hours a day and destroyed home life), and his ability to bridge class differences, he is Father Faber seen through the filter of Lord John Manners.

41. Carlyle was attracted to the conception of force as the world's animating principle, and consequently great men as those in whom the divine energy flowed. Carlyle, Thomas - Sartor Resartus - On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History, (London, 1908), Lecture 1, p.246.

42. The growth of the influence of the Oxford Movement, together with the defection of Cardinal Newman and his followers to the Church of Rome, led to an intense clash of attitudes within the Church of England itself.

**43. In a letter to Lord John Manners (12 May 1845) Disraeli wrote that he had based Marney Abbey on the abbey of Fountains, North Yorkshire, and Mowbray Church on Ripon Cathedral:**

**The Abbey was drawn from "Fountains", and is as faithfully delineated as musing observation and memory cd. enable me. It is a much vaster and grander ruin/than Bolton, tho' in a site far less picturesque. I took my idea of Mowbray church from Ripon wh. was at hand.**

**Manners had thought Marney Abbey was drawn "from the life, or rather death - of Bolton". Letter 1407, 12 May 1845, DL IV, pp.167-168.**

**44. John Sterling (1806-1844) attended Trinity College Cambridge, where his tutor was Julius Charles Hare. Originally his opinions were radical and Utilitarian, but he was introduced by Hare to the study of Niebuhr which effected a "revolution" and he became a leading member of the Cambridge "Apostles". He was a friend of Frederick Denison Maurice. After his introduction to the work of Coleridge he went to Germany to study German philosophy at Bonn, June 1833.**

**45. Carlyle wrote a brief monograph on his close friend and disciple John Sterling:- Carlyle, Thomas, The Life of John Sterling, (London, 1851). This is an important work on the moral and intellectual history of Sterling's generation, and which concludes that Sterling's brief spell as a curate was a misguided attempt to**

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impose unnatural constraints on his intellectual honesty and generosity of spirit. He abandoned Christianity along with another two of Carlyle disciples, Clough and Froude.

46. The first name of Disraeli's hero however is Harry not Arthur.
47. Sterling, John, Arthur Coningsby, (London, 1833), 3 vols, i, pp.46-47.
48. Tuell, A.K. John Sterling: a representative Victorian, (London, 1941), p.242.
49. Carlyle, Sterling, p.51.
50. Carlyle, Sterling, p..62, 82.
51. Carlyle, Sterling, p.82.
52. Sterling, Arthur Coningsby p.18.
53. Lukács, Georg, Goethe and his Age, trans Robert Anchor, (London, 1968), p.57.



*Notes to pages 165-176*

54. Arnold did not plan to publish Culture and Anarchy and Friendship's Garland in book form as the essays were composed over a number of years.
55. Arnold, Matthew, "The Popular Education of France: democracy", in Selected Prose, edited P.J. Keating, (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp.99-125.
56. Arnold, Matthew, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time", in Selected Prose, edited P.J. Keating, (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp.130-157 [154].
57. Arnold, Criticism, p.134.
58. Sterling, John, "On Carlyle", Essays and Tales by John Sterling, edited J.C. Hare, (London, 1839), p.327.
59. Sterling, "On Carlyle"; p.326.
60. Disraeli is intent on proving the poor to be mistaken and evoking a moral response, rather than arousing sympathy. His two major factory workers, Dandy Mick and Devilsdust are shown as adolescent malcontents with only the negligence of their superiors as a real motive for rebellion. They are well paid enough, he suggests, to entertain two girl friends in "The Cat and Fiddle" with drinks and hot sausages.

**CHAPTER 4: Lothair as classical "Bildungsroman"**

1. Stephen, Fortnightly Review pp.430-450 [433]. The term "passive bucket" was first applied to Coleridge by Thomas Carlyle in Chapter 8 of his Life of John Sterling, pp.48-49. Carlyle described Coleridge's "copious" way of talking to John Sterling as follows: "To sit as a passive bucket and be pumped into, whether you consent or not, can in the long-run be exhilarating to no creature".

2. Schlegel, Friedrich, 'On Goethe's Meister' (1798), in German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: the romantic ironists and Goethe, edited by Kathleen M. Wheeler, (Cambridge, 1984) pp.59-73 [p.61].

The English text of this follows the German Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, II, 126-46.

3. Frederic Harrison [1831-1923], a lawyer and leader of the Positivist movement reviewed Lothair in the Fortnightly Review, new series, 13, (June, 1870), pp.654-667, reprinted in Harrison, Frederic, The Choice of Books, (London, 1886), pp.147-171.

4. Schlegel himself rejected the notion of any objective truth in the text, insisting instead upon the analysis of response as itself a crucial part of criticism because it was the means of "self-cultivation", the ultimate aim of the Romantics.

Critical Fragments, (Kritische Fragmente), appeared in the journal Lyceum der Schöne Künste, in 1797.

5. Schlegel, "On Goethe's Meister", p.64.
6. New Monthly Magazine, 147, (August, 1870), pp.232-234.
7. Buckle, George Earl The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield V, 1868-1876 (London, 1920), p.299.
8. See p.83. where there is a discussion of Disraeli's pride in his Jewishness which confronted a pride in being a member of the aristocracy.
9. Abraham Hayward wrote "this Nobleman in search of a Religion (which might be the title of the book) is a passive instrument, a mere puppet, in the hands of the cliques or sets amongst whom he is successively thrown....", as an unsigned review in Macmillan's Magazine, 22, (June, 1870), pp.142-160. The author is identified by the Wellesley Index.
10. Schlegel, "On Goethe's Meister", pp.61-62.

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11. Buckle, V, 1868-1876, p.149.
12. Macmillan's Magazine, 22, (June, 1870), pp.142-160.
13. Quarterly Review, 129, (July, 1870), pp.63-87.
14. It was Archbishop Manning who supplied the model for Grandison; Disraeli felt personally betrayed by him. He had originally obtained Manning's support for a Catholic University subsidy before Gladstone won Manning's favour in his sponsorship of Irish Disestablishment. Robert Blake, in his biography of Disraeli, argues that Disraeli resented the Catholics for difficulties in Ireland which caused his downfall. See Disraeli, (London, 1969) pp.496-497.
15. Mr Phoebus is modelled on Lord Leighton (1834-1896). In 1883 the Royal Academy Address stressed Aryan achievements in art. He found "a new ideal of balanced form wholly Aryan" in Periclean art, (see William Gaunt, Victorian Olympus, (1952), pp.96-97) and Leighton saw Christianity's influence as leading to the degradation of the flesh.
16. Spinoza, B. Ethics, trans Andrew Boyle, (London, 1989) Preface to Fourth Part p.141.

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17. Arnold, Matthew, "Culture and Anarchy", in Selected Prose edited P.J. Keating, (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp.202-300 [214-216].
18. Arnold, p.237.
19. Arnold, p.236 and p.293.
20. Spinoza, pp.142-143.
21. Lord Beaconsfield on the Constitution: "What is he?" and "A Vindication of the English Constitution" by Disraeli the Younger, edited with an anecdotal (sic) preface by Francis Hitchman. (London, n.d.) p.39.
22. Spinoza, p.155.
23. Spinoza, p.159.
24. Spinoza, p.155.
25. Lord Beaconsfield on the Constitution, p.35.
26. Spinoza, p.223.

27. Catesby is based on Mgr. Capel (1836-1911), first and only rector of the Catholic Kensington University College which Manning founded. Capel was a prominent preacher and proselytizer for the aristocracy. The name Catesby given by Disraeli suggests Guy Fawkes' Jesuit co-plotter, Robert Catesby.

28. Pevsner, Nikolaus, Staffordshire, (Harmondsworth, 1974), p.56.

For details of the life of Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852) see Michael Trappes-Lomax, Pugin: a medieval Victorian, (London, 1932) Muriel Towers, owned by Lothair, is based on Alton Towers, known originally as Alton Abbey which belonged to the Catholic 16th Earl of Shrewsbury, and which Disraeli frequently visited in the 1860s and 1870s. Pugin, all of whose churches and patrons were Catholic, was one of the architects of Alton Towers which was begun in 1810, and taken over by him when most of the exterior was complete. He was responsible for the interior of the larger chapel and the Banqueting Hall.

29. His example, he hopes, will dismantle feudal structures in the relationship between landowners and central authorities with the aim of spreading the opportunity for "free and lively activity".

30. Thorslev, Peter, The Byronic Hero, (Minneapolis, 1962), p.143.

31. Disraeli, Lord George Bentinck, pp.553-554.

32. That Disraeli explained politics in terms of secret societies was based on his experience that a place in English society was more difficult to gain than a parliamentary seat. The gathering of English society at the time in fashionable clubs, to an outsider, must have looked mysterious and secret insofar as few people were admitted to them. They became mysterious only when outsiders, whether of class or race required admittance and were refused, or after many apparently irrational difficulties, admitted.

33. Disraeli wrote of the importance of secret societies in Lord George Bentinck. They were societies modelled on the eighteenth-century Freemasonry Lodge and formed in Italy and Germany to resist Napoleon's rule - hence they were "nationalists" - however, he distrusted them, and his distrust was reinforced by the Irish Fenian societies. During the 1860s Disraeli, in trying to obtain the Catholic vote in England, declined to meet Garibaldi in London (1864), ostensibly declaring that European nationalism was counter-productive to a civilized society. The Fenian society reinforced prejudice against underground nationalist movements by the outrages executed by the group.

34. Buckle, iv, 1855-1868 p.321. The Italian Revolution was in the spring, summer and autumn of 1860. With the exception of Rome and Venetia, nearly the whole of Italy was united under the House of Savoy.

35.        Roberts, J.M. The Mythology of the Secret Societies, (London, 1972), pp.1-2. This fact is borne out by Roberts who writes that "For about a century and a half large numbers of intelligent Europeans believed that much of what was happening in the world around then only happened because secret societies planned it so".

36.        Lord Stanley, in his political journals records that Disraeli declined to meet Garibaldi when he visited England and that on 10 April 1864:

D. in his most paradoxical mood, talking of Garibaldi, denying that he had ever won a battle, asserting that his Neapolitan success was due wholly to bribery, that he bought off the officers opposed to him, that his object in coming over was to collect a large fund. - Amusing at first, but his cynical affectation is apt to grow tedious.

Stanley, p.213.

According to Lord Stanley, Garibaldi was "the lion of London society". (16 April 1864), and "the popular enthusiasm continues unabated". However a telling comment on Garibaldi's "liberal" politics which Disraeli uses and then rejects as likely to fail is observed by Stanley who could not account for the enthusiasm, as the upper classes expressed only "curiosity". He thought "It will perplex the Continent [ie. the enthusiasm for his ideas], for there is no people in Europe among which Garibaldi's real ideas have made, or are likely to make, less way".

37.        Bruges is modelled on General Cluseret, a soldier of fortune who also played a large part in the defence of communard Paris in 1871.



38. (a) This is the figure in a liberty cap on French coins (the last model for which was Brigitte Bardot).
- (b) An Italian army was only able to take Rome when the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 made French interference impossible.
- (c) In The Trial of Woman: Feminism and the Occult Science in Victorian Literature and Society (London, 1992), Diana Basham refers to Lothair as a novel which juxtaposes the matriarchal England of its opening chapter with the symbolic matriarchy of the Secret Societies.

"Theodora is another version of the Occult Mother, but the revolutions with which she is concerned are political rather than, as in SHE, mythological. In her role as the realigner of interlocking antagonisms, she leads Lothair on a Grail Quest through the Secret Societies of Europe, a quest whose ultimate destination is the Battle of Mentana". p.210.

39. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, Collected Works, edited Kathleen Coburn, 16 vols., (Princeton, 1971), X, p.70.

40. Arnold, Matthew, From "Maurice de Guérin", in Selected Prose, edited P.J. Keating, (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp.157-159, [157].

41. Arnold, Matthew, "The Study of Poetry", in Selected Prose, edited P.J. Keating, (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp.340-366, [340].

42. Buckle, George Earl. The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield IV, 1855-1868 (London, 1916), p.374.

Disraeli had already clearly expressed his opposition to the evolutionary view in his response to the publication in 1844 of Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation by the Edinburgh publisher Robert Chambers (1802-1871). In his novel Tancred (1847) he derides the evolutionary doctrine (although Chambers' work was based not on natural selection but on cosmic evolutionism of the German Nature Philosophers), by placing pronouncements on the evolutionary hypothesis in the mouth of Constance Rawleigh, a young woman of scholarly pretension but little intellectual worth.

43. Goethe abhorred Newtonian science for its combination of abstract mathematical reasoning with experimentation under rigidly controlled conditions which were designed to preclude any factors due to the subjectivity of the scientist/experimenter. Goethe objected because, in his view, the real matter of science was man's total experience as a thinking and a sentient being, able to respond to many aspects of nature both within and without, with all his complex powers.

44. Christian theism (where God is regarded as a Being distinct from his creation though manifesting himself through it), has always rejected Pantheism, finding its identification of nature with God dangerously close to atheism. Western

philosophy regards Spinoza's doctrine of "Deus sive natura" (God or Nature) as the classic example of Pantheism.

45. Stephen, Leslie, Hours in a Library, 3 vols 1874-79, (London and New York, 1899), ii, 1876..

46. This is possibly a reference to the Catholic Earl of Shrewsbury commissioning Pugin to build a church at Cheadle for him near Alton Towers.

47. Schlegel, 'On Goethe's Meister', p.61.

48. Hegel, Phenomenology, p.50.

49. Disraeli, Benjamin, Letters of Disraeli to Lady Bradford and Lady Chesterfield, edited by Marquis of Zetland, 2 vols, (London, 1929), i, pp.135-136. Letter of 14 August, 1874 from Bretby Park. Disraeli is referring to Contarini Fleming as the book 'not...written by a boy'. He had discovered a link between Lady Bradford and himself when he became aware that she was reading his novels.

50. Voltaire, Candide; or optimism, translated John Butt (Harmondsworth, 1947), p.144.

*Notes to page 228*

**51.       Hegel, Phenomenology, p.11.**

**CONCLUSION**

1. Tirso da Molina was the pseudonym of Gabriel Téllez (1583-1648) known principally outside Spain for his dramatization of the Don Juan story written in 1630, The Seville Deceiver or Jester.
2. Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, translated by J.M. Cohen, (Harmondsworth, 1953), p.17.

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